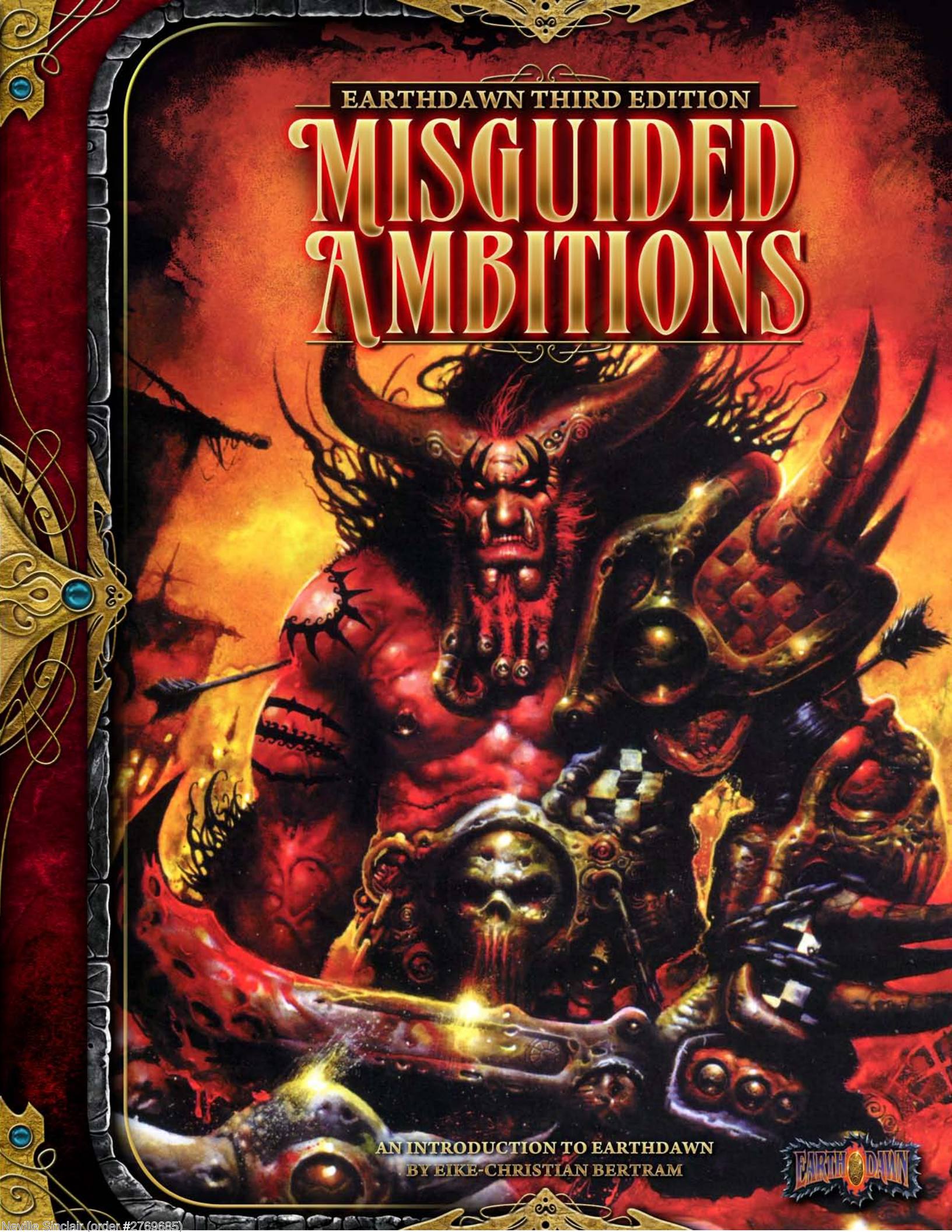
EARTHDAWN THIRD EDITION

MISGUIDED AMBITIONS



AN INTRODUCTION TO EARTHDAWN

BY EIKE-CHRISTIAN BERTRAM

EARTHDAWN

Neville Sinclair (order #2769685)

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• EARTHDAWN THIRD EDITION •

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INTRODUCTION

Our powers are frightening to most, as we control the forces of life and death, and as we do not fear encounters with the spirits of the dead and other denizens of the Netherworld. The Horrors. They are from the Netherworlds. And them, even we fear. But curiosity remains, and the wish to understand. And curiosity leads to temptation. And giving in to it leads to the fall. Harness your curiosity.

• Grorug, Nethermancer of the Sixth Spire •

Ladras stood before the Horror, his customary veneer of confidence and strength wearing painfully thin. As his eyes lingered over the grotesque form before him, its features impossibly mismatched and gruesome, he found his resolve weakening. The monstrous entity stood high on its six legs, no two pairs alike. The jointed legs of a spider worked in horrific tandem with the heavy hooves of a warhorse and a pair of human-like limbs that ended in hands with fingers splayed wide like some caricature of an acrobat. Four eyes burned in its misshapen head: a pair facing forward like those of a man, but another, more menacing pair set into the sides of the head, like those of some ravenous bird of prey. Ladras could see these outermost appendages clearly, even though he did not want to, but it was strangely comforting in comparison to the swirling field of magical darkness that shrouded the Horror's torso, impenetrable and all the more terrifying for the endless possibility of what it concealed. As those four eyes blinked in a single motion, Ladras became certain that the Horror knew what thoughts boiled in his mind, what weakness flitted about his heart. Yet this did not matter to Ladras, for he had come prepared. Ladras would cut a bargain with this creature; he would inflict terrible suffering on those who had scorned him, and through that suffering the Horror's hunger might be sated. If he worked as a tool of the Horror, it could feed on his deeds rather than its own. It would have no need to feed upon Ladras himself, for it would have its fill as he exacted vengeance on all those who had laughed at him. Their suffering would be the stuff of legends.

"Yes," the Horror growled, its voice resonant and deep but at the same time screeching, driving Ladras to wince. "I will lend to you my power, but there are conditions. There must be a price for such a bargain. I will grant you the power to forge undead constructs, but only if their control is granted to me when your campaign of vengeance is at an end."

Ladras nodded, for this was not an unreasonable request. He had expected as much, for this was a Horror, after all.

The Horror spoke again, its voice measured and careful beneath the otherworldly tone. "Then, Nethermancer, there is the matter of the connection. If you wish to receive my power, a link must be forged between us, a thread of power."

"What sort of connection?" Ladras' confidence faltered. This was unexpected.

"A blood oath" the Horror replied, "will suffice. A blood oath to provide the conduit through which you might receive my power. As you know, such an oath, born of blood, ensures that neither of us may break the pact. Does that satisfy your need for safety?"

Ladras hesitated, for the last time, before letting the visions of vengeance in his mind rise up once more. This power was well worth so simple a price. He smiled triumphantly as he exclaimed, "A blood oath it is!" and from his belt he produced a polished knife.

The oaths had been sworn, and Ladras had left to begin forging the constructs through which he would exact his revenge. It was a simple enough plan, but things would not go as Ladras presumed. Res'kretren knew far better than that. It had Horror-marked the Nethermancer, forged its own special brand of bond with the troll, and now it possessed a secret door into the mind of poor, foolish, naïve Ladras. Now that Ladras had accepted its help, Res'kretren would strengthen its hold each and every time Ladras called upon the powers he had borrowed. By the time Ladras realized that his actions were costing him his free will it would be far too late. Res'kretren knew all too well the corrupting influence of power on Namegivers; in fact it was this flaw in their character upon which the Horror thrived.

It would not even take all that long. The hubris of Nethermancers never ceased to amuse Res'kretren. The power available to the wise among the Nethermancers was staggering, but it was the young that amused the Horror so. Many would not, or could not, wait for the power they craved. They would seek out its kind, Horrors and their ilk, and demand alliance. Only those steadfast in their path were a threat to Res'kretren and its kin, and the steadfast were not those who sought allies from among the Horrors that plagued Barsaive.

Ladras was not steadfast. He was eager, and ambitious, and his pride was wounded. If ever there was a Namegiver perfect for the needs of Res'kretren, Ladras was such. The Horror did not understand the emotions of Namegivers, save for suffering, but it felt now the stirrings of an emotion all too rare in its kind: satisfaction. The very anticipation of what Ladras would do under Res'kretren's command, naively thinking that he was the master and Res'kretren the fool, was too delicious. It had been too long since the last village; too long since the last delicate feast of anguish and pain. Ladras would bring sustenance again: a feast of glorious proportions.

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WELCOME TO EARTHDAWN!

Through this demo adventure for the **Earthdawn Third Edition** roleplaying game, you have found your way into a world of magic, legends, and horror. The next pages will introduce you to the world of **Earthdawn**, its most important features, the role the characters play, the basic rules of the game, an introductory adventure, several pre-generated characters, and rules used for conflicts of physical, magical, and social nature. You can use these characters and the rules to complete the adventure without any additional materials other than dice, paper, and a pencil (and a couple of friends to play with, of course). You can find additional material on our website at earthdawn.com. Visit our forums for questions about this demo adventure, the other **Earthdawn** rulebooks available from **RedBrick**, and all things **Earthdawn.**

EARTHDAWN?

Earthdawn is a roleplaying game set in the Age of Legend: the world's ancient past when the cycle of magic was at its peak, and the Horrors entered the world to feast on the pain and suffering of the Namegiver races. The people of the province of Barsaive went into hiding in underground, magically protected caverns called kaers, and returned four centuries later to reclaim the surface. Another century has passed since, and much has been rebuilt, but the last of the Horrors still roam the lands, and the mighty Theran Empire has returned to claim Barsaive once more. It is now that Barsaive needs legends. For one, the legends of the past: the legacies of legendary heroes have created magical artifacts of great power that wait to be uncovered. Then, the legends of today: the legends that adventurers build for themselves by performing feats worthy of song and tale. Uncovering ancient weapons and building their own legends, the players set out to take the fight to the Horrors, the Therans, and whoever else stands in the way of hope for the future. For they are adepts and follow magical paths called Disciplines, their magical abilities becoming more powerful as their legends grow.

ROLEPLAYING GAME?

Everyone has read a book or seen a movie where the protagonist does something so utterly wrong that the reader or viewer wants to shout a warning to the character. But no warning from the audience can keep that character from doing what the plot demands, no matter how much trouble it lands him in. The readers and viewers can't change the character's behavior; we're just along for the ride. A roleplaying game turns this situation on its ear. In a roleplaying game the **players** control the actions, or play the roles, of their characters and respond as they wish to the events of the plot. If the player doesn't want his character to go through a door, the character won't. If the player thinks his character can talk himself out of a tight situation rather than resorting to that trusty sword, he can talk away. The plot of a roleplaying game is flexible, ultimately based on the decisions the players make for their characters.

In roleplaying, stories (the adventures) evolve much as they do in a movie or book, but within the flexible story line created by the **gamemaster**. The story outlines what might happen at certain times or in reaction to other events. The story remains an outline, with few concrete events, until the players become involved. When that happens, the adventure can become a drama as riveting as that great movie you saw last week or the book you stayed up all night to finish.

Though the players all contribute to the story, creating it as they play, the gamemaster creates the overall outline and controls events. The gamemaster keeps track of what happens and when, describes events as they occur so that the players (as characters) can react to them, keeps track of other characters in the game (referred to as gamemaster characters), and uses the game system to resolve the players' attempts to take action. The gamemaster describes the world as the characters see it, functioning as their eyes, ears, and other senses. Gamemastering takes both skill and practice to master, but the thrill of creating an adventure that engages the other players, tests both their gaming skills and the characters' skills in the game world, and captures the players' imaginations makes the gamemaster's job worthwhile. While there are many published game supplements and adventures to aid the gamemaster, talented gamemasters always adapt the game world to suit their own and their players' style.

A roleplaying game offers its players a level of challenge and personal involvement unmatched by any other type of game. Because the players and gamemaster create the adventures they play, what happens in the course of a roleplaying game is limited only by your imagination. The game is not a contest between the players and the gamemaster, however. The gamemaster may control all the bad guys, but he should work with the players to build and experience a tense, exciting adventure.

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WHAT'S IN THE DEMO?

In this demo for **Earthdawn Third Edition**, you find everything you need to get to know **Earthdawn** and take your first steps to learn the basics of the game. We cannot provide you with every detail of the rules or the world, but have tried our best to let you know about the most important things. Here is a quick overview of the chapters included in this demo:

THE GAME, THE RULES

This chapter gives a short overview of the history of the world of **Earthdawn**, explains the game's setting of Barsaive, and details the role of magic in both the game and the rules. Magic is an important aspect of **Earthdawn**, as every player character in **Earthdawn** uses magic to gain and master his abilities. Players need not necessarily read this part, but it is important that the gamemaster reads and understands this section.

An introduction to the basic rules follows: how the dice are rolled and how bonuses and penalties to dice rolls work. **Earthdawn** uses the Step System, in which several of a character's characteristics are added up to determine a Step, which translates into a certain combination of dice. **Earthdawn** uses dice with six, eight, ten, and twelve sides (called D6, D8, D10, and D12 respectively) and combines them in dice rolls.

MISGUIDED AMBITIONS

This chapter is for the gamemaster's eyes only. We have kept things simple. The adventure is very straightforward, and the player characters get little opportunity to stray from the path. It is intended as an introduction to the world of **Earthdawn** and the basic rules of the game. You can alter it if you have some experience with roleplaying games or **Earthdawn** in particular; we provide only the information necessary to complete the adventure. For example, while the characters are based in a town, the adventure doesn't provide detailed information on it, as the adventure does not take place there. Feel free to fill in the details as you see fit!

To guide the characters through the adventure, we provide several texts the gamemaster can read aloud to the players to get them into the right mood or give them information about the world in which their characters live.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

These are fivecharacters from which players may choose. These haven't been designed specifically for this adventure, but are sample archetypes found in the **Earthdawn Third Edition** ***Player's Guide***. It's unlikely the players need all of the characters' abilities during the adventure, but if you decide to continue playing with these characters, all of the abilities will eventually come in handy.

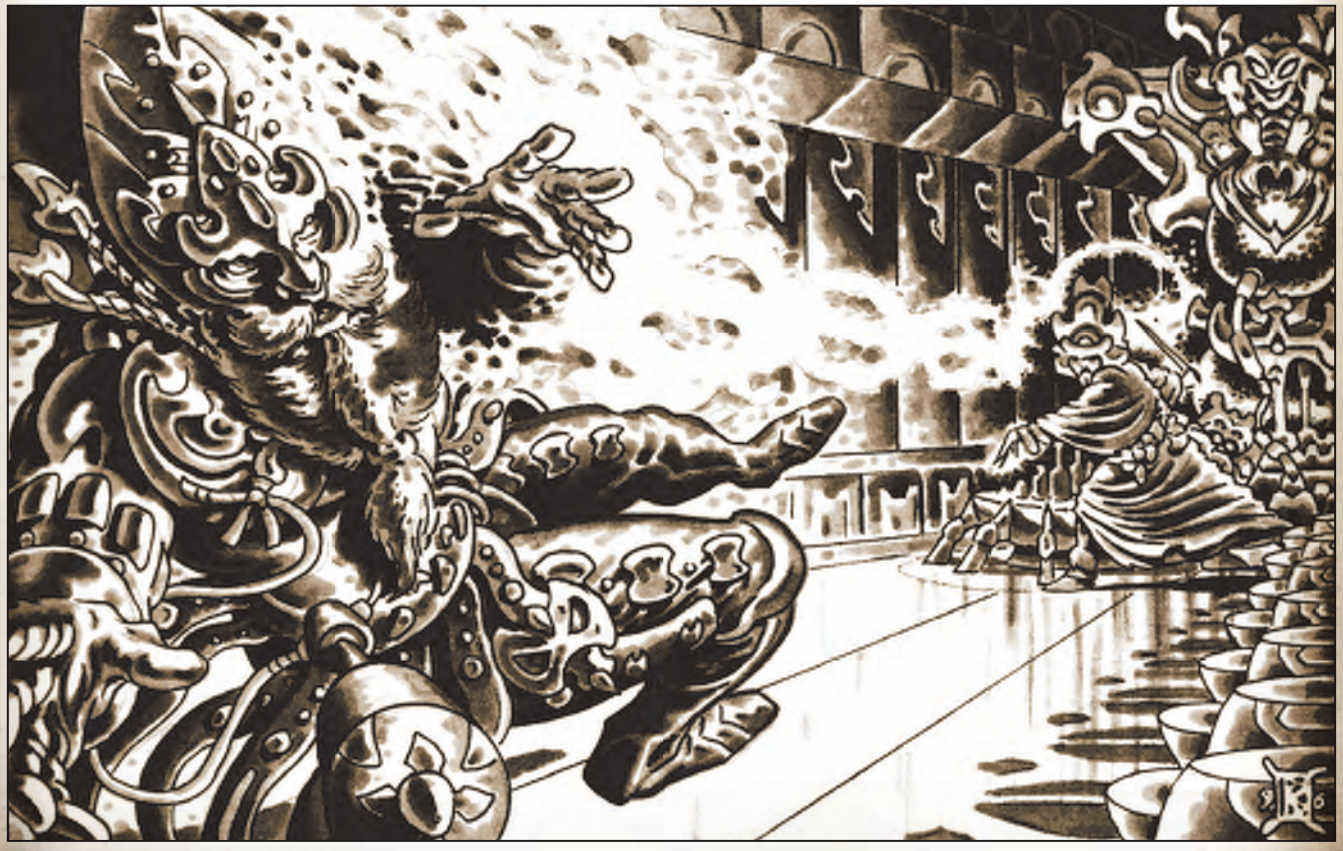
The adventure is designed with four players in mind, but offers guidelines on how to scale the opposition for a group of two to six.

FIGHTING AND HURTING

This chapter provides the rules for combat and healing damage. You should have at least one copy of it available at the table, as you will frequently need it while playing the game, and it comes in handy as a reference and overview of the possible maneuvers and options in combat.

EARTHDAWN THIRD EDITION

After you have completed the adventure, you can take a look at how your way on the path of the adept might continue once you get the **Earthdawn Third Edition** core rulebooks. You have only begun your journey, and much lies ahead as you build your legend.



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CHAPTER TWO

THE GAME, THE RULES

If you want to achieve mastery with the blade,
you had better start simple and use this stick.
Everything else will just get you killed.

• G'klak Mooneya Syrtis, Swordmaster •

This chapter describes what **Earthdawn** is about; what the characters usually do; and explains the basic rules of the game. Other rules are explained throughout the adventure as needed, and the rules for combat are explained in a separate chapter (**Fighting and Hurting**, p. 30) you can use at the table for convenient reference.

HISTORY

The peoples of the province of Barsaive (and the rest of the world) went into hiding below the ground or beneath the domes of fortified citadels for several centuries from a horde of nightmarish Horrors that ravaged the world and tried to feed on its inhabitants. The people of Barsaive returned to the surface about 100 years ago when most of the Horrors left, to reclaim and rebuild the world. During this time, they were faced with the return of their former saviors, the Theran Empire, now intent on ruling over the province again. Most of Barsaive lives in several city states, as the land still presents many dangers when one strays from the cities, towns, and trade routes. The last of the Horrors and their undead minions still roam the land, as do bandit tribes and Theran slave hunters. Adventurers, usually adepts following the magical Disciplines, set out to battle the Horrors, oppose Theran slavers, save remote villages from bandits, and seek out and explore the underground, dungeon-like places of hiding called kaers. Many kaers fell during the Scourge, breached by the Horrors, their inhabitants slaughtered and often turned into undead. They hold legendary treasure and valuable information of use to those rebuilding the land.

BARSAIVE

Barsaive is politically and economically dominated by a handful of city states ranging from 20,000 to 100,000 inhabitants, and another handful of nations that are very limited in expanse. These include the newly formed ork nation of Cara Fahd and the *aropagoi*, t'skrang trade covenants that dominate the mighty Serpent River that traverses the heart of Barsaive. Three Theran cities threaten Barsaive. In the Southwest lies the metropolis of Vivane with the nearby military stronghold of Sky Point, a platform built hundreds of yards into the air from which launch the stone airships of the mighty Theran navy. In Barsaive's heart resides the fortress of Triumph, once a flying stone fortress of immense proportions. In the Northeast lurks the lost city of Parlainth. Once the Theran capital of the province, Parlainth was stormed by the Horrors during the Scourge and is now a place of death, filled with Horrors and undead—and a lucrative target for adventure due to the many riches still hidden in its catacombs.

The hinterlands are still thinly settled and unexplored, providing opportunities for the gamemaster to place smaller towns and nations there as he sees fit. The wilderness may still hide many unexplored underground kaers, either populated or breached; citadels now in ruins; and dangerous beasts that roam the land. The peoples of Barsaive use safe trade routes to bridge the gaps between the cities and magical airships or riverboats to transport goods and passengers where no trade routes exist.

On the forefront of Barsaivian resistance against both the Therans and the remaining Horrors stands Barsaive's largest nation, the underground dwarf kingdom of Throal. Throal is also instrumental in both trade and exploration; the kingdom's trade companies dominate overland shipping, and the crown sponsors the explorations of adventurers across the land. The dwarf kingdom has gathered most of Barsaive's nations into a loose coalition that holds in common Throalic currency, language, and parts of its law. Of the latter, the *Council Compact*, at its core a passage condemning Theran slavery, is the most important.

Two major powers stand aside, however, with no one the wiser as to what their role in future conflicts with the Theran Empire will be. Blood Wood, an elven realm formerly known as Wyrm Wood, has not opened its borders since the end of the Scourge, but all of Barsaive knows the terrible price these elves paid to survive the Scourge. These elves mutilated themselves, working powerful magic that caused thorns to sprout from their skin so that their endless suffering would leave little opportunity for the Horrors to bring anguish to their nation. Most of Barsaive, especially its elven population, judge the former seat of elven culture as corrupted, not much different from the Horrors. Then there is Iopos, a mysterious city in Barsaive's Northwest. Ruled by the ancient Denairastas dynasty of magicians, the Iopans have recently become more involved in the workings of the Province as their masters seek to expand their sphere of influence into Barsaive proper. Rumors say the Iopans will use the conflict between Thera and Throal to carve themselves another piece out of Barsaive, although this would be a bold move indeed.

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MAGIC

Player characters are adepts. An adept follows a Discipline, a magical path focused on certain aspects of life. Some adepts cast spells in a certain field of magic, for example elemental magic or illusion magic. Most, however, use their magic to achieve physical tasks. Archer adepts fire their bows and transform their arrows into fiery projectiles. Warrior adepts dance on the air and deliver devastating magical blows to their enemies. Weaponsmiths use their magic to enhance weapons and armor and craft more powerful threaded arms and armor to which others weave magical threads for even greater effects. Adepts use their magic to both learn normal abilities quickly and master tasks not reproducible by mundane means.

Furthermore, magic is not limited solely to adepts. Many magical items produced by adepts have found their way into the lives of even the most mundane. A cook may use a magical firestarter to light his stove, or even use no fire at all and instead have pots and pans that heat themselves. Alchemical blood charms bond to the wearer's body and let him gain access to special abilities powered by his life force. Magical aqueducts transport and purify water, light quartzes produce light without a flame, and enchanted clothes keep people warm and dry no matter the weather. Last but not least, airships soar the sky, commanded by adepts that specialize in the task, and legendary artifacts wait to be found by adepts who will explore their mysteries and, through magic, unlock their secret powers and bond with them.

BASIC RULES

The magical abilities the adepts provided for this demo (p. 19) have are called talents, and these adepts also have mundane abilities called skills. Most talents and skills are used to make dice rolls called Action Tests, but a select few provide benefits without requiring any dice rolls. There can be bonuses or penalties to tests, and they have Result Levels that are sometimes used to identify the quality of Test Results. This section explains the basic procedures of the rules. More details on individual abilities, Defenses, and how combat works follow later: individual abilities are described on the character sheets (p. 20) or with opponents' statistics (in the adventure), while the combat procedure is described in a separate chapter (p. 30).

MAKING TESTS

Tests in **Earthdawn** are made with a combination of dice determined by the **Step Number** of the ability used. Have a look at the table to see what dice **Earthdawn** uses. If you look closely, you can easily gauge the progression the dice follow: D6 to D8, D8 to D10, and so on.

Most tests characters make are **Action Tests** against a **Difficulty Number**: either one of the opponent's Defense Ratings or an independently determined number, if the task is not directed against an opponent. For the latter, we have a short form for expressing the ability and Difficulty Number used that you will find throughout the adventure. If you read "the character has to succeed at a Climbing (6) Test," the Action Test is made up of rolling the dice that correspond to the Step Number of the character's Climbing talent or skill, and the Difficulty Number is 6.

To make the test, the dice are rolled and the results of the individual dice are added up, and this total **Test Result** is compared to the Difficulty Number. If the Test Result equals or exceeds the Difficulty Number, the test succeeds.

There are some Tests without a Difficulty Number: **Effect Tests**. Most Effect Tests follow Action Tests and determine the impact of the Action Tests. The most common Effect Tests are the Damage Tests that follow Attack Tests and the Spell Effect Tests that follow Spellcasting Tests.

STEP/ACTION DICE TABLE

Step Number	Action Dice
4	D6
5	D8
6	D10
7	D12
8	2D6
9	D8+D6
10	2D8
11	D10+D8
12	2D10
13	D12+D10
14	2D12
15	D12+2D6
16	D12+D8+D6
17	D12+2D8
18	D12+D10+D8
19	D12+2D10
20	2D12+D10

Krarg swings his sword at a bandit. He uses his Melee Weapons Talent to attack, which has a Step of 9. Looking up Step 9 on the Step/Action Dice table, Krarg's player determines he rolls D8+D6 for this Action Test. He rolls a 3 and a 4 for a total of 7. The difficulty of this test is the bandit's Physical Defense of 7. As Krarg's Attack Test Result is equal to or higher than his opponent's Physical Defense, the attack is successful. Now, Damage is rolled. The Damage Step, based on Krarg's Strength and weapon, is 12. Krarg's player looks up Step of 12 on the table, and rolls the indicated 2D10, achieving a Test Result of 13. This is the damage the bandit suffers (though he might subtract armor). There is no Difficulty Number for the Damage Test since it is an Effect Test.

Bonuses and Penalties

Sometimes, a test receives a bonus or penalty. A bonus or penalty is expressed as a number, positive or negative. This may be expressed as "the character gains a +2 bonus to his next Damage Test" or "the character receives a –1 penalty to all his tests for the round". There are two ways to handle bonuses or penalties, one of which is generally chosen by the players at the onset of play:

1. You can add or subtract the bonus or penalty from the Step Number, thus changing the dice rolled.
2. You can add or subtract the bonus or penalty from the result of the dice, thus changing the Test Result.

The two methods are statistically the same as far as the average result is concerned. Another interesting thing to know is that the Step Number equals the average result. This relation helps you to easily make up Difficulty Numbers on the fly. A character with a Step of 7 has a slightly better than 50 percent chance to succeed against a Difficulty number of 7. Step 7 is a typical Step for the characters provided with this demo, so use 7 if you need a Difficulty Number for an average task, and modify up or down by 1 or 2 for easier or more difficult tasks.

Krarg's group decided to use option number 2 for handling bonuses or penalties, as it is quicker when things change on the fly. Krarg is attacking the bandit again, but this time receives a +3 bonus from making an Aggressive Attack (p. 32). Krarg's player rolls a 7 and a 2, which is 9 in total. Now, he adds Krarg's +3 bonus. The total Attack Test Result is 12!

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Bonus Dice

The dice rolled in **Earthdawn** "explode" when they show their highest number; this is called scoring a **Bonus Die**. A die that scores a bonus die is rolled again, with the new result added to the old to determine the Test Result. For example, if you roll Step 7, which is a D12, and the die shows a 12, you roll it again. If it shows another 12, you roll it yet again. Once it shows any other number, you stop re-rolling, and add all results of the individual die rolls together to determine the Test Result. Bonus Dice are rolled as often as they show their highest number, but only the die that showed its highest number is re-rolled, not every die used for that Step. If Step 8 (2D6) is rolled and only one die shows a 6, only that die is a bonus die and re-rolled.

Krarg attacks the bandit for the third time, this time with a –2 penalty. His player scores an 8 on his D8 and a 4 on his D6. He may roll the D8 again, and scores another 4. Adding the dice up, he arrives at a result of 16 (8+4+4), from which he now subtracts 2 because of the penalty, for a total test result of 14. The penalty is only applied after the bonus die is resolved; it does not lower the die result directly.

RESULT LEVEL TABLE

Difficulty Number	—Result— Pathetic	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent	Extraordinary
2	–	1	2–4	5–6	7–8	9+
3	–	1–2	3–5	6–7	8–9	10+
4	–	1–3	4–6	7–9	10–11	12+
5	1	2–4	5–7	8–10	11–13	14+
6	1	2–5	6–8	9–12	13–16	17+
7	1–2	3–6	7–10	11–14	15–18	19+
8	1–3	4–7	8–12	13–15	16–19	20+
9	1–4	5–8	9–14	15–17	18–21	22+
10	1–5	6–9	10–15	16–19	20–22	23+
11	1–5	6–10	11–16	17–20	21–24	25+
12	1–6	7–11	12–17	18–22	23–26	27+
13	1–6	7–12	13–19	20–24	25–28	29+
14	1–7	8–13	14–20	21–25	26–30	31+
15	1–8	9–14	15–22	23–26	27–30	31+
16	1–9	10–15	16–23	24–27	28–32	33+
17	1–10	11–16	17–24	25–29	30–33	34+
18	1–11	12–17	18–25	26–30	31–35	36+
19	1–11	12–18	19–27	28–32	33–36	37+
20	1–12	13–19	20–28	29–33	34–38	39+

Result Levels

For any given Difficulty Number, there are several Result Levels. The Result Level normally needed to succeed is an Average Result. Better Result Levels, in the following order, are: Good, Excellent, and Extraordinary Results. There are some Result Levels below Average that can be used to determine special failure effects, but they are optional, and we won't use them here. The ones above Average are only used on two or three occasions in the demo adventure. Talents like the Swordmaster character's Taunt use Result Levels, and on an Attack Test, when the attacker achieves an Excellent Result (or better) against the opponent's Defense, he bypasses the target's armor. More information on Armor-Defeating Hits follows in the section on combat (p. 30). Note that an Excellent Result starts in the vicinity of double the original Difficulty Number. You don't need to consult the table on every attack, just look it up when an Attack Test Result comes close to double the Difficulty Number.

Krarg's player had an Attack Test Result of 14 on Krarg's last attack against the bandit, which is exactly double the bandit's Defense of 7. He looks at the table and sees that he needs a 15 to achieve an Excellent Result against the bandit's Defense. If he hadn't suffered from that –2 penalty…

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CHAPTER THREE

MISGUIDED AMBITIONS

So you want to go out on adventures.
But are you ready for it?
Yes, yes. You have completed your training.
But are you ready *to go out there?*

• Maslaan, Horror Stalker •

This chapter contains the adventure for our **Earthdawn** demo. While it references to the characters provided for the players that you find in the **Cast of Characters** chapter, the adventure can be completed by any combination of characters chosen.

As explained before, this adventure is simple and straightforward. It doesn't show you everything you can do in the world of **Earthdawn**. It helps you understand the basic procedures of the game and introduces you to the setting—the province of Barsaive—its history and the dangers that lurk there, but some of the more complicated aspects such as social conflict mechanics, taming of animal companions, picking a lock or someone's pockets, or singing songs that enthrall the masses have been left out, even though the characters we included have the ability to do such things. Being an adept in the world of **Earthdawn** is less about using one's abilities than following the path that allows one to develop them. It is not a profession, but a way and view of life.

To lay the bricks for the road to adventure, we start off with a short explanation of how the adventure is structured, and then give you a short overview of the entire adventure before going into the details of the adventure's individual Events.

ADVENTURE FORMAT

The adventure is divided into several parts, titled **Events**, and each part is subdivided to contain instructions on different aspects of that Event. Common to all parts are sections headlined Setting the Stage, Themes and Images, and Troubleshooting. All other headlines represent **Encounters**.

Setting the Stage provides the way the characters enter the Event. It contains text to be read or paraphrased to the players, a bit more comprehensive and a bit longer than comparable adventure products would contain, as we assume you are not familiar with the world of **Earthdawn**.

Themes and Images details the mood and tone of the Event. You can use the information provided to craft the voice and reaction of gamemaster characters; let it influence your description of the scenery where such is not provided, or when answering players' questions such as "What impression do I get of this place?"

Troubleshooting, located at the end of an Event, anticipates some of the things that can go wrong and gives some advice on how to resolve the situation.

Encounters have their own, individual headlines. They form the bulk of an Event. In some cases, you can go back and forth between them, but they are arranged in the order in which they are most likely to happen. For example, **Event 1: Prologue** contains the encounters **The Mission** and **Preparations**.

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

The adventure consists of five Events that are followed in chronological order (we're keeping things simple for this demo) and that are quite short (yes, we're also keeping it brief). Because some of the Events refer to encounters in later Events, here is a short overview and background of what has happened in the past to create the situation into which the characters are thrown, and how the characters are assumed to act in order to resolve the situation.

Some time ago, the troll Nethermancer Ladras, in an attempt to gain sufficient power to avenge perceived slights against his honor, made a pact with a Horror, forcing the Horror to impart some of its knowledge. This knowledge included the ability to create undead and artificial life, abilities normally only known to the most powerful followers of his Discipline. Ladras had tricked the Horror into revealing the knowledge by means of a contract sealed with a blood oath—or so Ladras thought. What had really happened was that Ladras had been Horror-marked by the Horror—tainted and corrupted, and via the connection of blood magic, influenced by the Horror. For a short time, Ladras could make use of new powers and abilities, but every time he used them, the Horror's influence over Ladras grew. Eventually, Ladras became the Horror's servant, corrupted to a point where he was the Horror's puppet, bound to do its bidding. At this point, the Horror commanded Ladras to go forth and create an army of undead for the Horror's own twisted purposes. The very powers Ladras had gained in the hopes of furthering his own agenda he now used in the Horror's service. After turning a handful of travelers into cadaver men—a basic type of undead Horror construct—Ladras came across a camp of lumberjacks hailing from the town of Tsennan. He kidnapped them with the help of his undead minions, planning to turn them into more cadaver men and even more powerful Horror constructs of a more grotesque nature. Enter the player characters.

In **Event 1: Prologue**, the characters are tasked to find the lumberjacks, as the woodsmen are late to check in.

In **Event 2: Clearing**, the characters arrive at the lumberjacks' camp and find it deserted. They investigate clues at the campsite and find tracks to follow the kidnappers.

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WHAT YOU GOT YOURSELVES INTO

Over one thousand years ago, scholars discovered the coming of an apocalypse. They Named it the Scourge. The Scourge would last for the four centuries surrounding the peak of the world's magic level, and during this time powerful and destructive entities called Horrors would cross the barrier between worlds to devastate the land and feed on the fear, anger, suffering, and flesh of the Namegivers, the members of the sentient races—dwarfs, elves, humans, orks, trolls, t'skrang, obsidiman, and windlings. Powerful adepts gathered to find the means to prevent the downfall of all living beings, and eventually founded the nation of Thera as a means to further this goal. The Therans discovered that the Namegivers could not combat the Horrors, but would have to hide from them and shield themselves behind magical barriers, either in domed cities called citadels or, more frequently, in underground fortifications called kaers. Vast resources and centuries of work went into the construction of these protective structures, and due to its unique position to pass on the knowledge of how to construct them—the *Rites of Protection and Passage*—Thera grew from an isolated island nation into an empire. To achieve their goal of preserving life throughout their numerous provinces, the Therans justified the means with the ends, and over the centuries of preparation began to enslave millions to dig kaers and lay bricks for citadels. Often, rulers would empty their nations' coffers to pay the Therans, or, if their resources were sparse, sell half of their subjects into Theran slavery to save the other half. Finally, five centuries ago, citadels closed their doors, and towns and villages entered their kaers to weather the coming storm. They had prepared for centuries of isolation with special magic to grow food underground, tap elemental sources for water, and light their caves by magical crystals. It wasn't easy, and it wasn't a safe bet. Countless kaers and citadels were breached by the Horrors, their inhabitants tortured in mind and body by the dark entities and their minions, feasted upon by these creatures from the foul depths of the Netherworlds.

About one hundred years ago, Namegivers started to emerge from their kaers. They found a devastated world with most life—both plant and animal—consumed, and in some cases twisted beyond recognition by the Horrors. However, they set out to rebuild their cities, foster what remained of nature, and bridge the gaps between their settlements by engaging in trade. One ingenious move by the dwarf kingdom of Throal allowed the peoples of the Theran Province of Barsaive to come to a mutual understanding: the *Book of Tomorrow*. A tome handed out prior to the Scourge to almost all kaers of Barsaive, it taught the techniques that allowed long-isolated Namegivers to rebuild civilization, lest the growing of grain and the building of houses be forgotten while generations passed underground. It was written in dwarf script, and this led to all of Barsaive adopting the dwarf language as its common tongue. Some fifty years ago, the Therans returned to Barsaive to once again claim the land as their province. The Barsaivians did not like that idea, most of them having adopted the Throalic code of law known as the *Council Compact* that renounced slavery and welcomed self-determination of individuals and nations alike. Now united, the Barsaivians resisted the Therans' half-hearted attempt to subdue them with the force of their mighty fleet of stone airships. The Therans, not fully committing to subduing Barsaive as they were focused on reclaiming richer provinces, retreated to a corner of Barsaive. Just recently, they have refocused their attention on your homelands by landing one of their mighty behemoths, the grand fortress *Triumph*, in the heart of Barsaive, establishing a base for future conquest. The land has recovered from the Horrors' onslaught, but with the Therans on its doorstep and much of the remote hinterlands of Barsaive still sparsely settled and largely unexplored, the thin network of larger city states sees itself challenged both by a force bent to dominate it, and the remnants of the Horrors and what these vile creatures left behind.

Your own kaer of Tsennan, Named for the town whose residents built and settled it, just recently opened when its locked doors were discovered by a Throalic expedition. Far to the North of Barsaive, your kaer feels that the threat of the Theran fortress of Triumph is far away, and rebuilding your community outside the kaer is the most pressing challenge at hand. The proximity of the Scythan Mountains, home once to another mighty dwarf kingdom struck early and completely destroyed by the Horrors, has led many of your people to move to one of the larger cities. The neighboring Blood Wood sends shivers down your spine at night. The blood elves dwelling there underwent a ritual that left thorns sprouting from their skin, causing them to live in constant self-inflicted agony to make themselves uninteresting to the Horrors. The elves among you say that this self-mutilation may be worse than anything the Horrors could have done. Out here in the hinterlands, with most of your people still living in tents and makeshift wooden shelters, there are no high walls or Throalic soldiers to protect you, and Horrors, undead, fierce beasts, and bandit tribes still roam the land. Fortunately, there are some among you who walk the adept's way—just like you. You use magic to achieve what others learn only after years of training, and to perform feats that cannot ever be performed by someone relying on mundane means alone. You are only at the beginning of your way, but if you follow the paths of your Disciplines to great accomplishments, you may one day become legends…

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In **Event 3: Gruesome Discovery**, the characters find the mutilated body of one of the lumberjacks while following the tracks.

In **Event 4: Corpses**, the characters find where the lumberjacks are being held, guarded by cadaver men, and can attempt to rescue the workers. They also learn what happened from the survivors.

Finally, in **Event 5: Blood Servants**, the characters venture into Ladras' lair and interrupt the ritual he is performing to craft a powerful Horror construct from the body of one of the lumberjacks—among other things. Ladras releases the Horror construct half finished to help him battle the characters. If the characters defeat Ladras and his construct servant, they prevent him from gathering a large army for the Horror, and can find some clues as to what has been going on.

EVENT 1: PROLOGUE

In this Event, the player characters are drawn into their first adventure as a village elder approaches them with a case of missing persons. It also serves as an introduction to the specific and the overall situation in which they find themselves. An extensive passage to be read to them serves this purpose.

SETTING THE STAGE

Read **What You Got Yourselves Into** (p. 9) to the players aloud, paraphrase it, or create a handout for them to read. It introduces your players to the world, its history, and how their situation fits into it.

THEMES AND IMAGES

In this introductory Event, the characters look over the construction site and surrounding landscape of their new home, the growing town of Tsennan. There is hope for a better life, but the mood darkens with news that hints at foul things going on. Before proceeding, make sure the players are familiar with the information presented on their character sheets.

THE MISSION

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

As adepts, your daily chores differ from everybody else's. Sitting on the green slopes of a hill overlooking the construction site of Tsennan, where houses for the families are being built now that the town hall and other communal facilities are finished, your duty is to watch out for trouble. Well, you haven't exactly learned any other trade, such as woodworking or farming; becoming an adept took all your energy and effort, not to speak of the years of training you spent before mastering even the faintest application of magic. You are confident in your abilities now, and even though a veteran guardsman or well-trained fighter could still beat you in a duel at this time, they could never hope to learn some of the abilities you have; abilities that only those able to wield magic can learn.

From the construction site, you see Elder Fennon approaching. A human in his sixties, Fennon has been sitting on the council of elders for almost ten years now and is in charge of managing raw materials, but he is really the practical type rather than a bureaucrat. As he draws nearer, you see his worn-out working clothes and the concerned look on his face. "Friends," he says, "we have a problem…"

Elder Fennon approaches the player characters with a task. He has assigned a group of workers to harvest lumber in the nearby woods, but none of the group have checked in with him. They were supposed to deliver lumber yesterday, and as they are now a day late, Fennon has decided to send someone to check on them. Being able to handle themselves, the player characters are the obvious choice to send, as sending the more experienced adepts of Tsennan would leave the town open to attack from the various dangers of the region. At this point, the characters can converse with Fennon to learn more about their mission. Fennon knows the following:

- There are six lumberjacks in the group: three humans (Kentram, his brother Mantek, and Geleem), two orks (Tartuk and his love interest, Lintak), and a dwarf (Gram Strongbrow).
- The lumber camp is located a half-hour into the woods; there is a path to the camp.
- The woods are one hour's walk to the North, and rather dense. (Some of the characters have likely been there before.)
- No one knows of any dangerous predators or other threats present in the forest.

As it is noon already, Fennon urges the characters to move quickly to best use the daylight remaining. If they agree to go, he tells them to visit Genna the Herbalist for some magical potions.

GENNA'S BAG

Genna's bag contains a number of healing aids, potions, and salves that she created using alchemy and her herbal lore. These potions are magical, and also contain the blessing of Genna's chosen Passion, Garlen. The number in parentheses next to a potion's name indicates how many of the potion the bag contains if there are four or fewer characters; if there are five or six characters increase every number by 1. All potions employ a Recovery Test in some way—read the rules for Recovery Tests (p. 32) when using such a potion.

Booster Potion (2)

A character may drink this basic healing aid at any time. He gains a +8 bonus to the next Recovery Test he makes within 24 hours, which means it greatly enhances his natural healing ability.

Healing Potion (1)

This is a very powerful and expensive potion. A character may drink it at any time. Once he does, the potion automatically heals one of his Wounds (p. 32). He may then choose to either make a Step8 Test and heal that many Damage Points, or add a +8 bonus to the next Recovery Test he makes within 24 hours.

Salve of Closure (3)

This salve heals a Wound to which it is applied, but this costs the character one of his Recovery Tests (the Recovery Test is spent, and there is no roll to reduce Damage Points).

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PREPARATIONS

The characters have the opportunity to get additional gear or provisions from town if they think this is necessary. They do not require them if they approach the adventure straight on, but the players do not know this. Assume they can find anything within reason and do not have to pay for it, but nothing beyond typical adventuring equipment. If a player thinks his character may need other weapons or armor, look at what other characters' sheets list and hand out an identical or similar item.

Genna the Herbalist is an ork in her thirties, which is a venerable age for orks, working out of a large tent that smells of the various herbs she uses to brew her potions. She is a questor of Garlen—a follower of the Passion of Hearth and Healing—and as such has some magical abilities herself. Her abilities pertain solely to healing and protection of homes and are not as diverse as the abilities the adepts have. When the players approach her, she has already prepared a small bag with several potions and remedies that she hands them as she wishes them success on their mission in the form of a short blessing. One of the lumberjacks, Tartuk, is her son. Refer to the Genna's Bag sidebar for a description of the potions and how they work.

Once all preparations are made, go to **Event 2: Clearing**.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Little can go wrong in this Event, short of the characters refusing to undertake the mission. If they ask for some form of payment, advise them that the people of Tsennan supply the characters with food, shelter, weapons, and armor, and do not require them to work or pay for them. In return, they expect the adepts to defend them and help them with their magical abilities. This is the way the world worked inside the kaer, where there wasn't even any money, and this is how it works for everybody in Tsennan. To be part of the community that is just being re-built, everyone has to contribute.

If the characters want items or equipment beyond what is available to them and that you cannot improvise, those items or equipment are simply not available or are currently used by someone else. The people of Tsennan are struggling for survival; it is reasonable to assume they lack certain luxuries, and prioritize production and acquisition of the most necessary items like tools or food.

EVENT 2: CLEARING

In this Event, the characters arrive at the lumberjack camp located in the woods, only to find it deserted. They can investigate clues to determine what has happened and follow tracks the kidnappers left.

SETTING THE STAGE

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> *The brief journey towards the woods seemed like an afternoon stroll, albeit one towards uncertainty. Now that you walk the narrow, furrowed path used to drag lumber to Tsennan, the day grows ever closer to night as you venture into the thickening forest. What sunlight makes it past the thick vegetation above your heads dances on the forest's floor and the trunks of the trees, and you cannot shake the impression of seeing something moving from the corner of your eye. If something has harmed the lumberjacks, it might be waiting for you right behind those trees…*
>
> *You discard such thoughts as memories of tales and stories both old and new as the birds are singing joyfully all around you. And already a clearing is coming up ahead, where the first trees cut this season made room for the workers' camp, the small field of tree stumps used as stools and tables for the workers' meals. Indeed, plates and bowls and cutlery are still laid out on several of them. But wait! Large portions of food are still left, and over there: a cup and a flask are tipped over, their contents spilled.*

THEMES AND IMAGES

For the most part, what the characters see in the clearing is already one of the possibilities they and their players expected, except that there are only little signs of struggle. Keep in mind that they are still new to the world, though. Much of what they know about the world is from ancient tales; little is from experience. Barsaivian tales tend to be tall, so it would not be unreasonable to develop far-flung ideas, like the lumberjacks having been snatched away on ropes lowered from an airship. In describing the scenery to the players and answering their questions, do not assume their characters can draw too many conclusions about what happened here.

THE INVESTIGATION

The camp is located on the edge of a roughly oval-shaped clearing covered in tree stumps, 20 yards across by 40 yards wide. Three tents served as the workers' shelter for the night, and a now-cold fire pit was dug between some stumps that are close together. Things appear as if the workers left in a hurry, with food still on plates and beer in mugs, but some items are on the ground or toppled over. Was there some sort of struggle, or is this the doing of wild animals attracted by the food? From examining the camp, the characters can learn the following:

- The fire is out and the remains are cold, it must have been out since yesterday, at least.
- The food was not touched by animals, there are no marks on it, and most of the plates sit orderly on tree stumps.
- More food, a good week's worth, is stored in sealed containers hanging from a rope on the tree nearest to the camp.
- The tents have their flaps closed, and inside is nothing of note but bedrolls, spare clothes, and a few personal items.
- Tools for harvesting lumber are neatly put away under a tarpaulin. If a character examines the tools closely, he notices there are no axes. If the tools are only examined briefly, a character may make a Perception (6) Test to notice this.
- A stack of hay and a harness are found next to another tree. These must have been for the horse used to drag the lumber to Tsennan, but there is no trace of the horse.

During the inspection of the camp, have every character make a Perception (8) Test to notice a small amount of blood on one of the tree stumps at the outer edge of the camp. The side the blood is on is facing away from the camp, and only a small amount of blood on top of the stump can be seen, except if approaching the camp from the other direction. A Perception (6) Test uncovers the footprints of a large group, at least ten strong, accompanied by a horse, travelling straight west. If the characters search long enough, they will eventually find both of these clues, but may waste a couple hours of good daylight on a lengthy search.

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TRACKING

Once the characters find the tracks, they can easily read and follow them. Close inspection reveals that all of the prints except the horse's were made by Namegivers. The tracks are deep, thanks to rain the night before last, which also narrows the time of the disappearance down to the previous day. The tracks can be followed, albeit slowly, at half the group's normal travel speed. If a character possesses the Tracking skill or talent and makes a successful Tracking (4) Test, the group can follow the tracks at their normal travel speed. Once the characters are following the tracks, go on to **Event 3: Gruesome Discovery**.

TROUBLESHOOTING

In this Event, problems may occur if the characters either do not find any clues, or spend too much time looking for clues even if they discovered all that are available. If they do not find anything, just tell them. Most importantly, do not require successful die rolls from them to allow them to continue. Failed die rolls should only obscure clues that are not absolutely necessary or should only slow them down and make things harder for them; reaching the end of the adventure should not be dependent on single rolls. If the characters spend too much time searching for clues that are not there, tell them it is beginning to get dark, or tell them flat-out that they have seen everything there is to see. You may decide there are consequences for wasting time, though. For example, the antagonist might have sacrificed another of the workers by the time the characters get to his lair (see p. 15).

SO WHAT HAPPENED HERE?

The Nethermancer Ladras commanded a small horde of cadaver men—creatures who once were Namegivers, but now are cursed with undeath through vile Horror magic—to capture the lumberjacks without causing them too much harm. He needs their life force and their blood for his own purposes. Under guise of being a traveler, he approached the camp, had the workers draw closer to him, and used his spells to subdue some of them. The other workers came to help, but the cadaver men fell upon their backs. During the brief fight, one of the workers fell and hit his head on the tree stump. Once the lumberjacks were subdued and bound, the magician took what he needed from the camp, and the workers were led away to his lair.

EVENT 3: GRUESOME DISCOVERY

While following the tracks to the antagonist's lair, the characters discover the body of one of the lumberjacks. It is horribly mutilated, and inspecting it can give them some clues as to what might await them ahead.

SETTING THE STAGE

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

Making your way through the forest, your eyes fixated on the tracks, you don't see the body until you are almost on top of it. Before you lies a human face down in the moss and last fall's leaves, in what appears to be his own blood. Turning him over, you look at his face and recognize him: Geleem, one of the lumberjacks. He is very obviously dead: his entire chest is torn open with what must have been a saw, for his ribcage is cracked open rather cleanly, and it seems some of his organs are missing. Geleem leaves his two young daughters orphans, his wife having died during the winter. You might not want to encounter whatever did this, but you certainly want to see it pay for what it has done…

THEMES AND IMAGES

None of the characters have ever seen something like what happened here done to a Namegiver. While they may have seen animals butchered, this Event reminds them of a butcher shop, which means that whatever did this considered Geleem as no more than an animal. Geleem has been literally gutted. In your descriptions of the Event and when answering the players' questions, do not treat it trivially or as something any adventurer might stomach easily. The player characters are not veterans of many battles; they are still rookies. Also, stress that this man is known to the characters; they might have stood behind him in the line for food just last week. Use his Name frequently and, if you want to explore the horrific aspects of this situation further, make up a few small episodes the characters remember about Geleem or his family, such as the aforementioned food line encounter.

INSPECTING THE BODY

The characters may want to more closely inspect Geleem's body to find out who or what might have done this to him, but they do not have to do this to complete the adventure. If they would rather go on, continue to **Event 4: Corpses**.

If they do want to inspect the body more closely, they find the following:

- Geleem's stomach seems to have been ripped open, but his breast is cut with a sharp instrument, his ribs separated from the sternum rather precisely.
- Geleem's heart and lungs are missing, maybe more— they cannot tell.
- He also has a few bruises on his face, arms, and shoulders, and his clothes are torn there. It looks like his nose is broken.
- It looks like someone tried to slit Geleem's throat, but did not succeed, as only the left side is slit.
- There is only little blood here; too little for a man of Geleem's size, especially considering what has been done to him.

A few of the pre-generated characters we provided have Knowledge skills that allow them to learn if there is an animal or other creature that would have done this, or if something like this has been heard of. We have not provided a suitable skill for every character, and not every character should be able to learn what is detailed

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below just from looking at Geleem's body. The Beastmaster may make a Wild Animals (4) Test to learn the following:

- Geleem's abdomen could have been torn open by an animal's claw, but you have found no traces of an animal that could do this since you left the kaer, nor have you heard of one. Some animals migrate, however.
- No animal you know or have heard of would be able to so cleanly open the breast and get past the ribs to reach the heart and lungs.
- There are no teeth marks on the corpse, and most wild animals do not act as selectively when eating organs.
- Some animals have been changed and twisted by the Scourge, though—maybe this is the case here. They might be twisted to eat only certain parts of a victim, but they are probably not able to open a ribcage in this manner either.

The Nethermancer may make a Magical Lore (5) Test to learn the following:

- Some magical rituals require blood. It is either used as an ingredient or spilt while performing the ritual to empower it.
- Horrors use bodies of animals and Namegivers to create monstrosities called Horror constructs. While they require more than just internal organs, the body parts used do not need to come from one source alone.
- Horrors mutilate Namegivers in front of others, causing fear and terror that nourishes the Horror.

The Troubadour may make a Legends and Heroes (7) Test and the Swordmaster may make a Barsaivian Legends (7) Test to learn the following:

- Legends tell of Horrors mutilating Namegivers in front of others, causing fear that nourishes the Horror.
- Other Legends tell of blood rituals that are fatal to an unwilling participant, greatly enhancing the ritual's power by tapping the victim's life force.

Once the characters have learned all they can or want to, go to **Event 4: Corpses**.

Troubleshooting

It is possible that the characters spend too much time examining the Event, maybe trying to find some clues that are not there. Similarly to **Event 2: Clearing**, you can push them by stressing the need to hurry—especially now that the characters know someone or something is killing people. They had better hurry before someone else dies…

Knowledge Tests

You may notice that the different Knowledge Tests used to learn something from Geleem's corpse use different Difficulty Numbers. In **Earthdawn's** system for Knowledge Tests, the Difficulty Number is determined by how closely the skill used fits the situation. We have kept things simple for this demo adventure, but the full rules also allow you to determine how much is learned in relation to the Test Result; the higher the result, the more the character learns. You will often find this expanded method used in official **Earthdawn** adventures.

If one of the players can convince you that one of his Knowledge skills can be applied to this situation in a way we have not foreseen, go ahead and allow a test; you can base the Difficulty Number and information gathered on the examples presented for the skills suggested here.

Event 4: Corpses

In this Event, the player characters finally arrive where the lumberjacks are being held. Undead creatures called cadaver men guard them, and the characters will have to defeat these Horror constructs to free the workers.

Setting the Stage

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> *As you spot movement in-between the trees ahead, you slow down, try to avoid making noise, and carefully approach what you think is the kidnappers' camp. Indeed it is. You see the narrow entrance to a cave in the face of a rock formation that has overgrown during the past centuries. To the trees next to the entrance, an ork, a dwarf, and two humans are bound, and they are guarded by rag-tag creatures that once may have been humans, but don't look quite alive any more. You retreat a bit, and consider how to proceed.*

Themes and Images

This is the characters' first encounter with actual "monsters." While they do not know exactly what they are facing at the beginning, the characters might grow more confident when learning something about the cadaver men. If one of the cadaver men falls into a Rage, stress its change of behaviour and the new dynamic it brings to the situation. Near the end, once the lumberjacks are freed, the characters learn more about what happened to set things in motion, answering some open questions, but bringing up new ones and new uncertainty as they wonder what lies beyond the entrance to that cave.

Reconnaissance

The characters can observe the cadaver men and use some of their abilities to gain an impression of what they are facing here. They may also be tempted to storm into combat to free the captives as soon as possible, which is not unreasonable; go to the next encounter, **Dead Moves**, in this case.

For the number of cadaver men present, refer to **Scaling the Fight**, p. 14. Without using any abilities and by pure observation, the characters can learn the following:

- The workers tied to the trees are Kentram and his brother, Mantek (two humans), Gram Strongbrow (a dwarf), and Lintak (an ork). Her fiancée Tartuk (an ork, Genna's son) is nowhere to be seen. Also missing is the workers' draft horse (should the characters have noticed there was one during their investigation of the campsite).
- Gram suffers from a head injury; blood runs down his temple (he was the one who hit his head on the blood-covered tree stump).
- The cadaver men seem lethargic, moving slowly, but their undead nature seems to make them ignorant of the minor cuts and bruises they possess. One of them has a bashed-in head, but doesn't seem to care much.
- The cadaver men's hands are bandaged with all sorts of rags, similar to the ones covering the rest of their bodies. Once, these must have been proper clothes.

The Nethermancer may make a Magical Lore (5) Test, the Swordmaster may make a Barsaivian Legends (7) Test, and the Troubadour may make a Legends and Heroes (7) Test to learn the following about cadaver men:

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- Cadaver men are deceased Namegivers, re-animated to undeath. They often retain sentience, but not their humanity. These particular examples were once humans.
- Cadaver men are most often created by Horrors, but Nethermancers of considerable power can also craft them.
- Horrors enjoy crafting cadaver men, because even though they are relatively weak constructs, they are in constant pain, both of the body and mind, further nurturing the Horror. Their suffering often drives cadaver men mad even if they retain their sentience.
- Cadaver men are normally slow, but if they are driven across a certain pain threshold, they fly into a berserker rage, attacking anything and anyone without prejudice.

Dead Moves

At some point, the players will want to attack the cadaver men, as there is no way to free the lumberjacks without doing so. The cadaver men have been commanded to guard the captives and cave entrance, and there is nothing that will distract them (for example, they do not follow any character trying to lure them into the woods). Refer to the notes on **Scaling the Fight** below to determine the number of cadaver men to use against whatever combination of characters your players chose. The cadaver men use the same rules as characters in combat (see **Fighting and Hurting**, p. 30), with the following exceptions and additions:

- They may have more than one Standard Action (cadaver men have 4 under certain circumstances).
- They have their Attack and Damage Steps listed directly instead of descriptions of Talents, Skills, and equipment.
- Cadaver men cannot be knocked unconscious; their Unconscious Rating is marked with "NA."

Some characters may try to employ stealth and trickery to gain an advantage; for example the Thief might try to sneak up to the captives and free them secretly. While the cadaver men might not notice him sneaking, they notice the captives moving free, and attack. The characters can then fight side by side with the lumberjacks, and have an advantage; the lumberjacks fare badly against cadaver men who are in a Rage, though.

No game information is provided for the lumberjacks. If they join the fight, simply assume they keep one of the cadaver men busy, without doing too much harm, until the characters deal with it.

Scaling the Fight

This is not the final confrontation, so the fight is not supposed to be the ultimate challenge, but should familiarize the players with their abilities for the coming, tougher fight against Ladras that is likely to have fewer but more decisive die rolls. The number of cadaver men to use depends on the number of player characters:

- Use one cadaver man for two characters.
- Use two cadaver men for three or four characters.
- Use three cadaver men for five or six characters.

If properly played, the Nethermancer can handle one cadaver man on his own thanks to his Undead Struggle spell, and the Swordmaster can handle one cadaver man on his own thanks to his good Melee Weapons and Parry steps. If your group includes both Disciplines, add another cadaver man.

The Captives

Once the cadaver men are defeated, the characters can free the captive lumberjacks and learn what happened to them. Gram Strongbrow acts as their spokesman, and details what is described in **So What Happened Here** (p. 12). He expands this explanation with the following:

Cadaver Men

Attributes

DEX: 4	**STR**: 6	**TOU**: 7
PER: 4	**WIL**: 6	**CHA**: 4

Characteristics

Initiative: 4	**Physical Defense**: 6
Actions: 1 (4; see text)	**Spell Defense**: 6
Attack: 7	**Social Defense**: 11
Damage:	**Physical Armor**: 0
Bandaged Claws: 6	**Mystic Armor**: 1
Death: 32	**Recovery Tests**: 3
Unconsciousness: NA	**Knockdown**: 6
Wound Threshold: 11	**Movement Rate:** 5

Commentary

Among one of the most feared powers of the Horrors is the ability to forge constructs from the dead, and sometimes the living, by binding a spirit of the dead to its former body. The Horrors enjoy confronting the living with their former loved ones, friends, or neighbors, now bound to the Horrors' service. While still largely sentient, all that a cadaver man knows is pain and loss. Social contact with them, if even possible, is disconcerting.

Special Rules

These cadaver men have suffered some injuries in previous fights with the lumberjacks and their horse, but have not had a chance to recover it yet. This is already figured into their statistics. Any more pain caused to a cadaver man brings it to the edge: if it suffers a Wound, if enters a Rage.

Rage: An enraged cadaver man makes 4 attacks per round until it has killed the source of the pain or 10 rounds have passed, whichever comes first. If a cadaver man cannot determine who caused it pain, it attacks and kills the nearest living creature. Note the cadaver man is not limited to attacking a single character when in a Rage; it is more likely to split up the attacks, attacking any character in front of it (its wrath is directed at what it sees).

After they were defeated and bound together by a rope connecting their necks, the lumberjacks and their horse were led to this site, taking some of the tools for harvesting lumber with them. On the way, the horse kicked out and hit one of the cadaver men in the head. The cadaver man flew into a rage and killed Geleem, but their captor, a troll, somehow managed to stop the cadaver man from killing them all by commanding the cadaver man in a booming voice. He then slit Geleem's throat, collected the dead human's blood, opened his chest, and ripped out some of Geleem's organs. After that incident, the cadaver mens' hands were bandaged, presumably so they would not accidentally kill the captives again. Arriving at the current location, the captives were bound, and the troll went into the cave. After some time, he returned and took Tartuk and the horse.

During this conversation, Lintak may interrupt, nervously urging the characters to go on into the cave to free Tartuk, for who knows what the troll will do to him!

Once the characters are ready to venture into the cave, go on to **Event 5: Blood Servants**. This is a good time to use some of the potions they brought and make Recovery Tests, but keep in mind that using Recovery Tests takes time (p. 32); they are likely to have time to make only one, and must use the healing potion if they need to recover more damage.

Troubleshooting

In this Event, the characters may have difficulties fighting the cadaver men. If this seems to be the case, simply reduce the cadaver men's Death Ratings, end their Rage, or reduce their Attack Step. This first fight is supposed to get the players used to rolling the dice in preparation for the coming encounter with the troll Nethermancer, Ladras. Do not push them too hard against the cadaver men.

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IT'S A TRAP!

If one of the players plays the Thief character, you may want to include a couple of traps in the adventure to provide an additional challenge for the character—although Thief adepts become more proficient with traps further down the road, they start out with some basic abilities.

Handle the traps as a part of Event 4. Ladras has placed a bear trap in a natural indentation in the tunnel the characters need to traverse to enter his lair, and he has spun a tripwire across the tunnel 10 yards further in that causes rocks to fall down from the ceiling. Any character can spot a trap with a successful Perception Test against the trap's Detection Difficulty, though only the two characters on the front of the group are entitled to a test because of confined fields of vision. If the trap remains hidden, it is set off, and the trap and character triggering it make opposed Initiative Tests. If the trap's Initiative Test is higher, the character tripping the trap suffers the consequences described under the trap's effect. The following special rules apply to the Thief character: He makes a Trap Initiative Test instead of an Initiative Test, he may actively search for traps rolling Step 8 against the Detection Difficulty, and he may Disarm the trap by making a Step 8 Test against the Disarm Difficulty. He may spend Karma on any of these tests. The game statistics for the traps appear below.

Bear Trap

Detection: 5 **Disarm**: 4
Initiative: Step 7 **Trigger**: Pressure

Effect: Stepping onto the trap causes Step 8 damage, no armor protects against this damage. If the damage causes a Wound, the character's Movement Rate is reduced by 1 until the Wound is healed.

Falling Rocks

Detection: 7 **Disarm**: 6
Initiative: Step 6 **Trigger**: Tripwire

Effect: Tripping the wire loosens some rocks from the ceiling, the character beneath suffers Step 12 damage. The character behind him must make an Initiative (4) Test or be hit by some of the debris for Step 10 damage.

If the characters take too long planning an attack, you can goad them into action by having Ladras take another captive into the cave, either briefly coming out himself or having a cadaver man escort the lumberjack in.

If they refuse to do anything or refuse to go on into the cave, or go back for reinforcements, simply end the adventure and explain what happened in the aftermath. For example, some other adepts may free the captives (or come too late, but defeat Ladras), be honoured as heroes and saviours of Tsennan, and gain new powers from their increased personal Legends.

EVENT 5: BLOOD SERVANTS

In this final Event, the characters confront the troll Nethermancer Ladras and one of his constructs: a more powerful cadaver man he crafted from Tartuk's body.

SETTING THE STAGE

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

For a couple of minutes, you follow the dark, slightly downward-sloping tunnel that lies beyond the entrance to the cave. You proceed quickly, knowing all too well that Tartuk still needs rescuing. Finally, you come upon dim light at the end of the tunnel, which widens into a cave.

In the light of torches on stands and stuck into crevices in the walls, you see the tall figure of a troll clad in piecemeal metal armor. His already impressive frame is brought to nine feet tall by the horns protruding from his head, and he whispers in a tongue unknown to you as his long arms weave complex patterns over the cavern floor. No, not the cavern floor. It seems an indentation is filled with… blood… and the carcass of a horse is lying next to it. You notice the blood's coppery smell, and the surface of the pool of blood glistens red. It almost appears as if something is moving in there, causing ripples.

One of you gasps, and the troll looks up towards you, not interrupting his recitation or the weaving of patterns with his hands. You see both surprise and anger in his eyes. As you ready your weapons, his gestures and speech hasten, and then the troll calls out a final phrase, his voice booming eerily through the cavern in a tone that goes beyond the natural. A figure erupts from the pool of blood: Tartuk! Or rather, what was once Tartuk. His face is no more than a twisted façade now, and from his elbows, axes protrude instead of forearms and hands. As he walks out of the pool, you realize his legs have been replaced with those of a horse, and hooves clack on the cavern floor. You shiver in terror and disgust. But Tartuk is lost, and you cannot allow yourselves to feel pity or show mercy. You close in, intent to end this grotesque mockery of an innocent man's life.

THEMES AND IMAGES

The characters have seen a lot by now. Mutilation. Undead. But now, they are confronted with a fusion of Namegiver, animal, and inanimate objects. The characters haven't played Shadowrun or seen Schwarzenegger as a cyborg; they may stomach Tartuk's transformation for now, but it should affect them.

BATH OF BLOOD AND TORCHLIGHT

This fight is pretty straightforward; the characters have been spotted, and there is nothing they can do before engaging Tartuk and Ladras. They may retreat at first to lay an ambush, but that merely moves the combat to another location and provides a chance to strike first. If a character or creature is not aware of his attacker prior to being attacked, he may be surprised. To determine if a character is surprised, he makes a Perception Test against the lowest Dexterity step among the hidden opponents. If this test fails, the Surprised character or creature cannot act during the first round of combat, and receives a –3 penalty to all of his Defense Ratings.

During the fight, Ladras tries to stay in the background and attack with spells, letting his Tartuk-construct take on the brunt of close

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combat. He may try to stay on the side of the blood pool opposite from the characters and Tartuk, or may give Tartuk commands to maneuver in-between himself and the characters. He issues commands in an unnaturally-pitched voice to Tartuk to achieve this, and may do the same to direct Tartuk to attack a particular character. This positioning can be more easily shown if you make a sketch of the situation or use a battlemap.

Words of Power

The Troubadour character may use his Mimic Voice talent to fool Tartuk by imitating Ladras' voice. For this to succeed, the Troubadour must have heard Ladras' voice, make a Mimic Voice Test to memorize and mimic it, and then issue a command to Tartuk in the Nethermancer's voice. To do so, Tartuk must not see it is the Troubadour who speaks, and the Troubadour makes a new Mimic Voice test for every attempt to fool Tartuk. Tartuk makes an automatic Perception Test against the result of the Mimic Voice Test to see through the deceit, but if he fails, he does what the Troubadour tells him to do until instructed otherwise by Ladras.

Scaling the Fight

This adventure is designed with a mixed group of four players in mind, and as for the previous battle, the encounter has to be modified if there are fewer or more player characters. As we cannot work with the number of opponents here, modify it as follows:

- If there are only two or three characters, Ladras does not use his Ethereal Darkness spell, and Tartuk does not use his Kick power.
- If there are five characters, Ladras has 3 Karma Points; if there are six characters, he has 5 Karma Points. He may use 1 of these points on any Spellcasting or Thread Weaving Test.

PROVEN TAINT

As the characters look around after the fight, they may discover some clues about what Ladras was doing here, and why. A bag lying in a corner contains his journal, and it details how his Nethermancer peers of Bartertown, a city to the South near Throal, mocked him for being inept at magic compared to their own standards. He decided to forge a blood pact with a Horror, and the Horror granted him powers that craft Horror constructs—techniques normally only available to very powerful Nethermancers with more experience of life and death. These powers corrupted Ladras, as is evident in his writing becoming more and more spooky, describing the enjoyment of killing the humans he turned into his cadaver men servants. The journal details Ladras' plan (as he describes it; in reality, it was the Horror's command) to seek out more victims to turn into cadaver men, and then to eventually return to Bartertown and let his former peers be slaughtered by his undead army.

The journal also contains instructions for the blood rituals used to create the undead, written in Ladras' own blood, but they are useless without a blood pact with a Horror. The Nethermancer player character can identify them for what they are with a Read/Write Magic or Magical Theory (6) Test, though. The Nethermancer character can also use his Astral Sight talent on the pool of blood, an Astral Sight (6) Test confirms that the pool is tainted with Horror magic. In fact, the magic performed here has tainted the whole cave. Maybe the taint will dissipate in time, but for the foreseeable future, this place is better left alone, lest the taint rub off on someone visiting.

TARTUK

Attributes

DEX: 6	**STR**: 7	**TOU**: 8
PER: 4	**WIL**: 6	**CHA**: 4

Characteristcs

Initiative: 6	**Physical Defense**: 8
Actions: 1	**Spell Defense**: 6
Attack: 8	**Social Defense**: 11
Damage:	**Physical Armor**: 0
Axe: 12	**Mystic Armor**: 2
Death: 44	**Recovery Tests**: 4
Unconsciousness: NA	**Knockdown**: 8
Wound Threshold: 13	**Movement Rate:** 8

Powers

Kick: 9

Description

Tartuk was once a young and strong ork, but now his legs have been replaced with those of a horse, and axes sprout from his elbows instead of forearms. His clothing is torn and soaked in blood from his bath in the blood pool. His face retains none of his youthful spirit, but is a grimace of pain, hate, and fury. His new legs make him fast and cause a fearsome stomp when he moves. He seems less reminiscent of a Namegiver than even the cadaver men.

Special Rules

Tartuk does not have the Rage ability of the cadaver men, but he does have a special Kick power. Note that while Tartuk has two axes, one on each arm, he can only attack with one of them. Should Ladras die or be knocked unconscious, Tartuk continues to fight nonetheless.

Kick: Instead of using an axe to attack, Tartuk may Kick his opponent, knocking him back with his powerful horse legs. To do this, he makes an Attack as normal, but instead of rolling the axe Damage Step of 12 to determine damage, he rolls the Step of 9 indicated for the Kick power to determine damage. Physical Armor protects from this damage, but the character has to immediately make a Knockdown Test against the full result of the Kick Test (not the amount of damage taken after reducing for armor). If this test fails, the character is knocked down (p. 32).

TROUBLESHOOTING

If the fight against Ladras and Tartuk seems to go badly for the characters, have Ladras retreat for a round or two to change the spells in his Matrices. Normally, magicians have to use these to protect themselves from possible Horror corruption and astral warping, but we have not made this necessary for Ladras because he is corrupted already. If things go wrong, simply re-introduce this step. If things look very bad for the characters, have Ladras flee, and Tartuk block the characters' way out. The characters then have to battle Tartuk before being able to follow Ladras. Ladras can then surprise them on their way out of the cave. In between, the characters, as well as Ladras, each have a chance to make a Recovery Test.

LADRAS

Attributes

DEX: 5	**STR**: 7	**TOU**: 6
PER: 6	**WIL**: 7	**CHA**: 6

Characteristics

Initiative: 5	**Physical Defense**: 7
Actions: 1	**Spell Defense**: 8
Attack: 7	**Social Defense**: 7
Damage:	**Physical Armor**: 4
Sword: 12	**Mystic Armor**: 2
Death: 46	**Recovery Tests**: 3
Unconsciousness: 36	**Knockdown**: 7
Wound Threshold: 10	**Movement Rate:** 7

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Powers

Durability 2, Spellcasting: 10, Thread Weaving: 9

Spells

Ethereal Darkness, Spirit Dart: 9, Spirit Grip: 13

Description

A troll of nine feet with two horns protruding from his head, human shaped but more powerfully built, Ladras is a Nethermancer who has strayed from the path and allied himself with a Horror. Piecemeal armor leaves much of his skin uncovered, bathing it in the red light reflected from the pool. He wields a crude, curved, but nasty-looking sword in the style of the troll clans, and the red of the light makes it seem bloodied already.

Special Rules

Ladras is presented here in a creature format rather than as an adept for your convenience, including his Melee Weapons skill as his Attack Step. His talents are listed as powers; they are as described for the Nethermancer player character (p. 22). He uses his Spellcasting power when attacking with a spell, not his Attack Step. The Durability power is another talent that increases his Death and Unconsciousness Ratings; these increases are already figured in (this talent is available to adepts starting at Second Circle). His spells are explained below.

Ethereal Darkness: Ladras makes a Thread Weaving (6) Test. If successful, during the next round, he makes a Spellcasting (8) Test to surround himself with darkness. If successful, a 4-yard (2-hex) sphere of darkness surrounds him for 9 rounds. Anyone in it or acting against someone within it (like Ladras) receives a –5 penalty to his tests. Nethermancers (including the player character Nethermancer) can see through the darkness and are not affected.

Spirit Dart: Ladras makes a Spellcasting Test against the Spell Defense of a character within 10 yards (5 hexes). If successful, the spell causes step 9 Damage; Mystic Armor protects.

Spirit Grip: Ladras makes a Spellcasting Test against the Spell Defense of an adjacent (within range of touch) character. If successful, the spell causes Step 13 Damage; Physical Armor protects.

AFTERMATH

If you feel like it and have time to spare, you can end this adventure by describing the characters' return to Tsennan. You can detail the ambiguity of them being honoured as heroes but having been forced to kill the son of Genna, the local questor of Garlen.

In a full **Earthdawn** adventure, we would now provide details of how the end of the adventure could spawn new ones; for example trying to find the Horror that corrupted Ladras or trying to find better protection for Tsennan workers who have to work away from the safety of the town. Most of our books contain numerous "adventure hooks": ideas or adventure seeds you can use to expand an adventure or tie into a location or person presented in a supplemental book. Some adventures may describe noteworthy effects on the game world. For example, if this adventure was one in a line of adventures in and around Tsennan, it would mention changes to the Genna or Lintak characters, or if anything changes in how the town works. If you want to use the town of Tsennan and the pre-generated player characters in your future **Earthdawn** games, you will have to determine these effects yourself.

Lastly, we give advice on how to award Legend Points for completing the adventure. Legend Points are a measure of character experience gained, used to learn and improve a character's abilities. The sum of a character's Legend Points is a measure of a character's Legend. If you use the characters played in this adventure in your future games, award them 250 Legend Points, which is an average award for First Circle adepts. This is enough to increase a Talent's rank from 1 to 2, fill the Karma Points back up again, and have some Legend Points to spare. Alternatively, these are enough points for a character to learn a new skill or talent at rank 1. Adventures with more opportunity for roleplaying, social conflicts, the finding of legendary artifacts, and exceptional heroics may award more Legend Points than the average, and speed the characters' rise to legend.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

You don't wanna do your numbers? I don't wanna hear that no more! You're doing the numbers and finishing them or you don't go out to play. Doing your numbers builds character, boy! Character!

• KRENTLOK THE NASTY, TEACHER OF CLAN BLOODLETTER •

This chapter contains fivepre-generated characters to play in the adventure. These characters appear as archetypes in the **Earthdawn *Player's Guide*** and were designed to cover a variety of situations in many possible adventures. We decided to use these archetypes instead of designing characters geared towards the demo adventure so that if you decide to play on with them, you are prepared for a multitude of situations rather than just this single adventure. We have added some additional explanations to them and removed some aspects pertaining to more advanced rules, but you can easily add these again later. Have a look at the first sheet for each character, and then read the following description, or have the gamemaster read it to you while you peruse the sheets.

YOUR CHARACTERS

You live in a world that went into hiding below the ground for half a millennium, besieged by vile Horrors from the depths of the Netherworlds who are nourished by fear and suffering. It is a world of people that have returned to claim the surface once again and have endured a century of struggle to rebuild the cornerstones of civilization. Born of these dangerous times, you are an adept of one of the Namegiver races.

The eight Namegiver races are the industrious and resilient dwarfs, the supple yet determined elves, the versatile and ubiquitous humans, the mighty yet calm obsidimen whose flesh is like stone, the passionate and athletic orks, the honor-bound and tough trolls, the flamboyant reptilian t'skrang, and the tiny and cheerful windlings. To this number some would add the powerful and mysterious dragons. The Namegiver races are not the only sentient beings, but they alone can Name things, and give them meaning in the world. The power of Naming is the power to create, and so only the Namegiver races build civilizations and produce things of beauty. It is thanks to this power that Namegivers can follow the paths of the adept, as these paths cannot be walked without understanding the power of Names and the Names of these paths in particular.

Adepts are members of the Disciplines, walkers on paths that require following certain philosophies to learn and improve magical abilities called talents. They also have non-magical abilities, but as they advance in their Disciplines, their magical talents often come to outnumber their mundane skills. Following the adept's way requires a certain worldview befitting that Discipline. For example, a member of the Warrior Discipline approaches life head-on, prefers to act rather than to react, acts from strategic thought rather than emotion, having his goal of victory clearly in his mind's eye. That goal is life and peace, as war is a means to an end, and this end is to live in peace. The adept does not adopt this philosophy because he is a Warrior; it is the other way around. He was able to become a Warrior because he lived in that manner and acted on those thoughts and saw the world that way, before becoming an adept. None of this required him to ever take up arms and train or even fight, because it is the mind that makes the Warrior (or any adept).

Your magical talents do not require training or experience in their use to be learned or improved; they require knowledge of one's self, self-reflection through meditation, and a connection to the magic of the world that grows as one's importance to the world—one's Legend—grows. Few are able to reach the clarity of purpose and determination to master one's self and become adepts, and fewer still succeed in becoming what the people call Living Legends, the greatest heroes of their time. But in this time of need such Living Legends are needed more than ever.

Adepts, even Initiates having attained but the first of fifteen Circles, can perform miraculous things. They have abilities that cannot be duplicated by non-magical means. As they advance through the Circles of their Disciplines, they gain more and more abilities, and these new abilities veer further and further away from what is possible for the mundane. The world is filled with magic, and adepts can connect to it. They can bind powerful artifacts to themselves and tap their power, weave magical threads to others to bolster their abilities, and re-weave their own selves to modify their talents and bodies. They cast powerful spells, slay the terrible nightmares known as Horrors, entrance the masses to follow them, and excel at any of their given specialties.

You are an adept. You follow your path. Band together with followers of other paths, and you can help restore the world. It is up to you to make your Legend.

YOUR CHARACTER SHEET

On your character sheet, you will find the following statistics and information.

The first line gives you a **Name**, **Race**, and **Discipline**. You are of First Circle in this Discipline and considered an "Ini-

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tiate." You can change the Name if you like, and choose a gender and most of your appearance. Most Namegiver races do not have any limit as to what color of hair, eyes, or skin they have, but some colors are more common than others. (Of course we say "most" because some races do not have hair at all.)

Below that, you will find a short quote of a couple of sentences that a member of your Discipline, not necessarily yourself, might say about the Discipline. You will also find a generalized description of your race and Discipline. Race and Discipline are the most important influences on your life, and much of the material **Earthdawn** books intended for player characters provide focuses on races and Disciplines.

Much of the information below this will refer to "Steps," most of your abilities have Step Numbers. Steps determine what dice you roll, and the table on the second page of your sheet details how a Step Number is converted into the dice you roll. For more on rolling dice to make tests, see p. 6.

Attributes

Going into more tangible things, the first part of your character's statistics is a block of your six attributes: **Dexterity** (DEX), **Perception** (PER), **Strength** (STR), **Willpower** (WIL), **Toughness** (TOU), and **Charisma** (CHA). The number in parentheses is the Attribute Value, which is influenced by race and determines many of the other Characteristics on the sheet, but is not used in play. The number after the colon is the Step for that Attribute. You roll this Step when you make a test for an Attribute, or use it as base to determine other Steps, such as Talent Steps.

Characteristics

Below Attributes, you will find a block of Characteristics most often used in combat.

Initiative is a step based on Dexterity, rolled at the start of a combat round to determine who goes first. Initiative may be reduced by wearing armor (if your character does, it is already figured in).

Physical Armor is subtracted from physical attack damage. **Mystic Armor** is subtracted from most magical attacks.

Your **Death** Rating is the number of Damage Points you can take before you die, your **Unconsciousness** Rating is the number of Damage Points you can take before you fall unconscious. In **Earthdawn**, you do not subtract damage you take from these, you add it up to a running Damage Total: when you heal, you reduce your Damage Total, the Ratings remain unchanged. If you suffer Damage Points equal to or greater than your **Wound Threshold** in a single hit, you also suffer a Wound. The first Wound is not too serious, but for every other Wound thereafter you receive a –1 penalty to all tests. For example, if you have 4 Wounds, you receive a –3 penalty. When you suffer a Wound, you have a chance to be Knocked Down (p. 32).

Your **Physical**, **Spell**, and **Social Defense Ratings** protect from their namesakes' types of attacks. Attacks are rolled against the appropriate Defense Rating (the attack ability describes what it is rolled against) of the target. If the result is equal or higher, the attack hits and an effect occurs or is applied. Often this effect is damage.

You have a number of **Recovery Tests** each day. You roll one of these Recovery Tests using your Toughness Step (see p. 32).

The **Knockdown** Step is used for Knockdown Tests, to remain standing when you receive a Wound.

Your **Movement** Rate is the number of hexes you can move per combat round. A hex is 2 yards wide, so you can simply double the Movement Rate to determine how far you can move in yards.

Lastly, you have **Karma Points**. You can spend a single Karma Point on Discipline Talent Tests (see below). Spent Karma Points are gone (at least in the scope of this adventure, so use them with care)! When you spend a Karma Point on a Discipline Talent, you add an *additional* D6 to the dice normally rolled for the Talent.

Abilities

Below the statistics block, you have lists of **Talents** and **Skills**. All have a Rank (in parentheses) and most have a Step (after the colon) that is determined by adding an Attribute Step to the Rank. If there is no Step, the ability is not rolled and is used in some other way. Some talents are Discipline Talents; you may spend one Karma Point on a roll with these. Some skills are Artisan Skills, which allow you to produce art. The people of Barsaive believe that Namegivers tainted by the Horrors cannot produce art, and learn Artisan Skills to prove they are free from taint. Some skills are Knowledge Skills and reflect areas in which your character has useful knowledge. All others are General Skills, and are practically applied.

Most **Spells** list a Weaving Difficulty, which the magician needs to beat on a Threadweaving Test. If successful, he can cast the spell in the following round, making a Spellcasting Test against the target's Spell Defense. Of course, the target must be within the range given in the spell's description.

You also have **Racial Abilities**. Each entry explains what they are for your race and how they work.

Equipment

Finally, you have **Armor**, **Weapons**, and other **Equipment**. We have kept things simple here; you have the opportunity to get a few things that you think you may need during the course of the adventure. Your armor is already figured into your statistics, and the weapons have your Strength added into their Damage Step (so if you trade weapons, subtract your Strength, and then add the other character's Strength, to determine how much damage the weapon does in his hands). You will learn more about armor and weapons in **Fighting and Hurting**, p. 30.

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GRANOGG SHORTTUSK, FIRST CIRCLE ORK BEASTMASTER

Bah! What do you know of me? You see only what you wish. You think animals are crude and dirty, and so therefore I am as well. You have lost sight of their inherent nobility, the purity of their beings, their honor. There is a trust among my animals and between them and me that I do not find among people. My animals do not lie, or betray, or scheme. They are quick to love and forgive, and their loyalty, when earned, knows no bounds. Tell me, where can I find this in civilization? Where can I find this among people? Yes, some men I count as my friends, but only a handful have earned that status.

Race: You are an ork. Orks are known for their passion and love of freedom, often living in nature rather than the cities. They are physical beings who lead fast-paced but short lives. Your ears are slightly pointed, your body hair grows strong, and your lower canines protrude beyond the upper lip. At 6 feet 5 inches, 230 pounds, and with tanned skin and wild hair you make an impressive figure.

Discipline: You are a Beastmaster. Beastmasters form bonds with animals, taking animals as companions. Some take just one, some take many. Some never take any and simply live among the beasts as if one of them. You have not yet found a good animal companion, but you are only at the start of your career. Beastmasters learn many abilities that mimic animal powers or emulate their strengths.

GAME INFORMATION

Attributes

DEX (13): 6 | **PER** (11): 5 | **STR** (16): 7
WIL (11): 5 | **TOU** (14): 6 | **CHA** (16): 7

Characteristics

Initiative: 5
Physical Armor: 6
Mystic Armor: 2
Physical Defense: 7
Spell Defense: 7
Social Defense: 9
Death: 36
Unconsciousness: 28
Wound Threshold: 10
Recovery Tests: 3
Knockdown: 7
Movement: 7
Karma Points: 5

Beastmaster Talents

Animal Bond[D] (1): 8
Claw Shape[D] (2): 9
Creature Analysis[D] (1): 7
Karma Ritual[D] (1)
Tracking (1): 6
Unarmed Combat[D] (2): 8

[D] Discipline Talent

Skills

Creature Lore[K] (2): 7
Fishing (1): 6
Melee Weapons (2): 8
Read/Write Language (2): Dwarf, Ork
Speak Language (2): Dwarf, Ork
Swimming (1): 8
Throwing Weapons (1): 7
Wild Animals[K] (2): 7
Wood Carving[A] (1): 8

[A] Artisan skill; [K] Knowledge skill

Racil Abilities

You have Low-Light Vision that allows you to see perfectly by no brighter a light source than the stars. You also have the blessing and curse that is *gahad*. *Gahad* makes it hard for you to control your instincts in certain situations, and is triggered by something that you find offensive. In your case, *gahad* is triggered by mistreatment of animals. If you witness it and want to keep control, you must succeed at a Willpower (6) Test. If you fail, you have to act against the perpetrator. If you act, whether by choice or because you failed the Willpower Test, you gain a +1 bonus to all tests made to end or avenge the mistreatment of animals.

Armor

Buckler (Deflect 1/0, Phys 1), Hide (Phys 5; Myst 1; Init 1)

Weapons

Hand-Axe (Damage 11), 2×Daggers (Damage 9; Range 5–10), Whip (Damage 10; Entangle 9)

Equipment

Fishing Kit, Traveler's Garb, Wood Carving Tools

Neville Sinclair (order #2769685)

YOUR BEASTMASTER'S ABILITIES

On this sheet, we explain your most important abilities. We explain the ones you are unlikely to need only briefly. Two concepts are important to understanding these abilities: Actions and Strain.

In a single combat round, you only have one **Action**. Some talents or skills use up this Action. This means that if you use this talent or skill, you cannot use another talent or skill that uses an Action. In the full **Earthdawn** game, there is more to Actions and different types of them, but we don't need that here.

Some talents or skills are demanding to use or require energy to power them; they cause **Strain**. A talent or skill that causes Strain causes you 1 Damage Point every time you use it (every time you roll it). Often, taking this damage pays off because it helps you to avoid taking more Damage or to accomplish great deeds. In the full **Earthdawn** game, some abilities cause more than 1 Strain, but they are more powerful than what you have now.

The descriptions below note if a talent or skill uses the Action or causes Strain.

Important Talents and Skills

Claw Shape: Your hands turn into claws until the end of the round. You use the Claw Shape Step to roll damage for Unarmed Combat. This is not as good as using your melee weapons, but as Claw Shape is a Discipline talent, you may spend Karma on the Claw Shape Test.

Melee Weapons: *Action*. This skill is used to attack with a melee weapon. The difficulty is the opponent's Physical Defense. Damage depends on the weapon used.

Throwing Weapons: *Action*. This skill is used to attack with a thrown weapon. The difficulty is the opponent's Physical Defense. Damage depends on the weapon used. Weapons have ranges: if the opponent is farther away (in hexes) than the first value, you suffer a –2 penalty to the Attack and Damage Tests. If he is farther away than the second value, he is out of reach.

Tracking: *Action, Strain*. If you use this on tracks you have found, you roll its Step against a Difficulty Number equal to the Dexterity Step of whatever left the tracks, and they are magically highlighted in your field of vision, so you can follow them for an hour.

Unarmed Combat: *Action*. This talent is used to attack unarmed; the difficulty is the opponent's Physical Defense. Damage is your unmodified Strength Step or, in your case, Claw Shape (see above). Weapons often do more damage, but you can spend Karma here, so your chance to hit is better.

Wild Animals: *Action*. You roll this to see what you know about wild animals. The gamemaster determines the difficulty. The difference between Wild Animals and Creature Lore (below) is that Wild Animals is more narrowly defined, covering only wild animals, so the difficulty will be lower if your question is about wild animals. Creature Lore, as a broader ability, also covers domesticated animals and animal products.

Other Talents and Skills

Animal Bond: You use this over long periods to bond to an animal, eventually turning it into an animal companion.

Creature Analysis: You use this to analyze an animal. It is similar to your Knowledge Skills, but gives you more detailed information, including some of a creature's game statistics.

Creature Lore: You roll this to see what you know about all manner of animals. The gamemaster determines the difficulty.

Fishing: You use this to fish to gather food.

Karma Ritual: You perform this ritual to replenish used Karma Points, and to determine how many you can have at any one time.

STEP/ACTION DICE TABLE

Step Number	Action Dice
4	D6
5	D8
6	D10
7	D12
8	2D6
9	D8+D6
10	2D8
11	D10+D8
12	2D10
13	D12+D10
14	2D12
15	D12+2D6
16	D12+D8+D6
17	D12+2D8
18	D12+D10+D8
19	D12+2D10
20	2D12+D10

Read/Write and **Speak Language**: These are the languages you know how to read and write or speak. In the full game, there are occasions where you roll these, but you won't need them here.

Swimming: You roll this to swim. We don't have any water in this adventure, though.

Wood Carving: Your Artisan skill is an important pastime for you, and you may carry some objects made with it around.

Contributing

You contribute to the group's efforts with your knowledge of animals and the wilderness. You are an adequate fighter, but not as good as the Swordmaster. Most of the time, you may want to stick to your melee weapons, as your Claw Shape is not yet that powerful, and your Karma Points to enhance those tests are few. In a decisive fight, you should use Karma on both Unarmed Combat Attack and Claw Shape Tests, though.

Neville Sinclair (order #2769685)

NAELON TOLAN, FIRST CIRCLE HUMAN NETHERMANCER

Why do you fear me? If you think I mean you harm, you are mistaken. My concerns lie in worlds beyond this one. The netherworlds are mine to explore, their denizens mine to command. They whisper only to me, revealing the quiet secrets of impossible depths. They scream to me the terrible truths of the brilliant heights. Their words caress me like music, giving my soul flight and my mind freedom. My body may be flesh, but magic fills my mind and my soul soars through the netherworlds.

Race: You are a human. Humans are known to be adaptable to any situation, climate, or task. Shy of 6 feet tall and weighing about 150 pounds, humans are often considered unremarkable, with a few regional exceptions.

Discipline: You are a Nethermancer. Nethermancers are magicians who seek to understand life and death, body and spirit. Nethermancy magic often directly affects life forms and life energy rather than objects or the mind, but also summons spirits, especially as the adept grows more powerful. Their spells can heal, but also harm. Nethermancers are viewed with suspicion in some places and by the superstitious, as many of their spells are similar to Horror magic, and because they converse with the spirits of the dead.

GAME INFORMATION

Attributes

DEX (13): 6	**PER** (16): 7	**STR** (12): 5
WIL (14): 6	**TOU** (13): 6	**CHA** (13): 6

Characteristics

Initiative: 5	**Physical Defense:** 7
Physical Armor: 3	**Spell Defense:** 9
Mystic Armor: 2	**Social Defense:** 7
Death: 35	**Recovery Tests:** 2
Unconsciousness: 27	**Knockdown:** 5*
Wound Threshold: 9	**Movement:** 6

Karma Points: 5

* See the Wound Balance skill

Nethermancer Talents

Astral Sight [D] (1): 8
Karma Ritual [D] (1)
Read/Write Magic [D] (1): 8
Spellcasting [D] (2): 9
Spell Matrix [D] (1): 1
Spell Matrix (1): 1
Thread Weaving [Nethermancy] [D] (1): 8
Versatility (0)

[D] Discipline Talent

Skills

Alchemy and Potions [K] (1): 8
Magical Theory [K] (2): 8
Melee Weapons (1): 7
Missile Weapons (1): 7
Read/Write Language (2): Dwarf, Human
Robe Embroidery [A] (1): 7
Scourge History [K] (1): 8
Speak Language (2): Dwarf, Human
Throwing Weapons (1): 7
Unarmed Combat (1): 7
Wound Balance (1): 6

[A] Artisan skill; [K] Knowledge skill

Nethermancy Spells

Bone Dance, Detect Undead, Experience Death, Spirit Grip, Undead Struggle (you normally know a couple more, but these five serve as a solid foundation for this adventure.)

Racial Abilities

Human adepts can learn the Versatility Talent, which in turn allows them to learn talents of other Disciplines. As magicians need to focus their energy on their spellcasting abilities, you have not done so.

Armor

Leather Armor (Phys 3)

Weapons

Quarterstaff (Damage 9), 2×Daggers (Damage 7; Range 5–10 yards), Sling (Damage 7; Range 10–20 yards)

Equipment

Embroidered Robe, Embroidery Tools, Grimoire (your spellbook), Traveler's Garb

Neville Sinclair (order #2769685)

YOUR NETHERMANCER'S ABILITIES

On this sheet, we explain your most important abilities. We explain the ones you are unlikely to need only briefly.

You will want to know two other concepts before that, though: Actions and Strain. This is explained on other sheets, but there is no place here because of your spells. Look it up on one of the other sheets.

Important Talents and Skills

Astral Sight: *Strain*. You make an Astral Sight (6) Test to see into astral space for 1 round. Astral space is always lit, and you see sources of magic such as magical items or active spells glowing brightly. If you beat a person's Spell Defense with the roll, you can learn whether the person is an adept or not.

Magical Theory: *Action*. You roll this to see what you know about magic. The difficulty is determined by the gamemaster.

Read/Write Magic: *Action*. You use this to learn spells, but also to read magical texts and magical runes.

Scourge History: *Action*. You can recount the history of the Scourge, the time of hiding, and related aspects.

Spell Matrix: You have two of these, and use them to shield yourself from raw magical energy. You attune spells to them, one per matrix—a process that takes 10 minutes. You can only cast these two spells (but see the "re-attuning" rules for Thread Weaving below), but may cast them as often as you want (they are not used up). In the full game, you can also cast spells by other (more dangerous or complicated) methods.

Spellcasting: *Action*. You use this to cast your spells at a target, just like an Attack Test. The Difficulty Number is the target's Spell Defense.

Thread Weaving [**Nethermancy**]: *Action*. Some spells are more powerful than others and require more energy in the form of threads. You must make a Thread Weaving Test against the indicated "*Weaving*" difficulty. If successful, you have woven the thread. You must use Spellcasting in the next round. If the spell does not list a Weaving Difficulty, it can be cast right away if in a Spell Matrix. You also use Thread Weaving to re-attune a matrix in just one round. Spend *Strain* and roll this talent against 7 or the Thread Weaving Difficulty of the spell × 2, whichever is higher. If successful, the new spell is in the Spell Matrix (replacing the old one).

Wound Balance: You roll this instead of your Knockdown Step when you must make a Knockdown Test.

Other Talents and Skills

Alchemy and Potions: You have Knowledge of potions and poisons, and can determine if someone is poisoned.

Karma Ritual: You perform this ritual to replenish used Karma Points, and to determine how many you can have at any one time.

Melee Weapons, **Missile Weapons**, **Throwing Weapons**, and **Unarmed Combat**: *Actions.* These abilities are used to make attacks of their respective types, and all target the opponent's Physical Defense, dealing damage using the weapon that corresponds to the attack type. Because your spells may be cast repeatedly without exhausting you, these combat skills are often your last resort.

Read/Write and **Speak Language**: These are the languages you how know to read and write or speak. In the full game, there are occasions where you roll them, but you won't need them here.

Robe Embroidery: Your Artisan skill. You use this to constantly add new embroideries to your robes.

Spells

Astral Spear: *Weaving (6).* A spear of astral energy flies at a target within 48 yards (24 hexes). If successful, roll Step 12 to determine Damage. The target's Mystic Armor protects against this damage.

Bone Dance: *Weaving (7).* Cast against a target within 10 yards (5 hexes) to take control of its skeleton. Once successfully cast, you roll Step 10 in each of the next 5 rounds against the target's STR Step. If successful, the target moves at random and has a –2 penalty to all tests and Defenses the rest of that round. Making the roll in any round but the first uses your Action, and if you stop making rolls, the spell ends.

STEP/ACTION DICE TABLE

Step Number	Action Dice
4	D6
5	D8
6	D10
7	D12
8	2D6
9	D8+D6
10	2D8
11	D10+D8
12	2D10
13	D12+D10
14	2D12
15	D12+2D6
16	D12+D8+D6
17	D12+2D8
18	D12+D10+D8
19	D12+2D10
20	2D12+D10

Detect Undead: The person this spell is cast on can detect undead. After casting, it works for 5 minutes, and the person may use his Action to make a Step 11 Test against the Spell Defense of any undead within 30 yards (15 hexes). If successful, he knows there are undead within range, but not where exactly they are.

Spirit Grip: Cast against an adjacent opponent. If successful, roll Step 12 to determine damage; Physical Armor protects against this damage.

Undead Struggle: This risky spell is cast on an undead within 4 yards (2 hexes) and lasts 5 rounds if successfully cast. You and the undead are locked in a mental duel and cannot do anything else. In this and the next 4 rounds, roll Step 10. The undead rolls its WIL Step. The results are compared and the one with the lower result takes damage equal to the difference; Mystic Armor protects.

Contributing

You can contribute to the group's efforts primarily through your knowledge of magic, Horrors and the undead, and your Nethermancy spells. When in combat you should stay at range if you can, relying on the Swordmaster and others to run defense to keep you out of the melee. Some Namegivers are particularly wary of Nethermancers; perhaps you can use this to your advantage?

Neville Sinclair (order #2769685)

B'TRIZT R'TRENN, FIRST CIRCLE T'SKRANG SWORDMASTER

A twist of the wrist, a slip of the blade, and your posturing is ended! Defend yourself, sir! You have insulted me and I demand satisfaction. Support your gibes with steel or be silent! Overconfident? 'Tis true I fear no blade, nor any foolish enough to draw one against me. But I merely display my prowess so that all may save themselves the embarrassment of their own spilled blood. What? Have I ever lost? Nay, sir, I have only learned.

Race: You are a t'skrang. T'skrang are 6-foot-tall reptilians with muscular tails another 6 feet long, weighing 200 pounds, 40 of which is from the tail alone. T'skrang are flamboyant and have a taste for the dramatic. They love the water, and the largest t'skrang communities are located on the rivers or in towers built into the rivers, from where they launch their riverboats to trade. As you do not hail from a river community, you try to see the water whenever possible.

Discipline: You are a Swordmaster. Swordmasters are fighters learning the techniques of dueling with their chosen weapon. You have chosen the weapon most common among your Discipline, and the one preferred by most of your race: the sword. You deliver thrusts with both your sword's tip and your wit.

GAME INFORMATION

Attributes

DEX (19): 8	**STR** (13): 6	**TOU** (14): 6
PER (11): 5	**WIL** (10): 5	**CHA** (14): 6

Characteristics

Initiative: 6/D10	**Physical Defense:** 10
Physical Armor: 8	**Spell Defense:** 7
Mystic Armor: 0	**Spell Defense:** 7
Death: 36	**Recovery Tests:** 3
Unconsciousness: 28	**Knockdown:** 6 *
Wound Threshold: 10	**Movement:** 6

Karma Points: 4

* See the Wound Balance talent

Swordmaster Talents

Karma Ritual [D] (1)
Maneuver [D] (1): 9
Melee Weapons [D] (2): 10
Parry [D] (2): 10
Taunt [D] (1): 7
Wound Balance (1): 7

[D] Discipline Talent

Skills

Avoid Blow (2): 10
Barsaivian Legends [K] (1): 6
Conceal Object (1): 9
Conversation (1): 7
Dancing [A] (1): 7
First Impression (1): 7
Read/Write Language (2): Dwarf, T'skrang
Speak Language (2): Dwarf, T'skrang
Swimming (1): 7
Throwing Weapons (1): 9
T'skrang Lore [K] (1): 6
Unarmed Combat (1): 9

[A] Artisan skill; [K] Knowledge skill

Racial Abilities

You have the Tail Combat ability. You can use your tail to strike using Unarmed Combat, causing Step 6/D10 damage. You can tie your short sword or dagger to your tail (the broadsword is too large) to increase this damage, using the Step shown for the weapon, and use this weapon to attack instead of the one in your hand, but the attack is made using Unarmed Combat. Alternatively, at the start of the round, you can announce either a Tail Parry or Tail Attack. During a Tail Parry round, you add up to +3 to your Physical Defense, but receive the same as a penalty to all Action Tests for the round. During a Tail Attack round, you may make an additional attack with the tail in addition to the one with your hand-held weapon, but you receive a –2 penalty to all Tests.

Armor

Footman's Shield (Deflect 2/0; Phys 3; Init 1), Hardened Leather (Phys 5; Init 1)

Weapons

Broadsword (Damage 11), Short Sword (Damage 10), Dagger (Damage 8; Range 5–10; concealed, see Conceal Object on next sheet)

Equipment

Adventurer's Kit, Trail Rations (1 week), Traveler's Garb

Neville Sinclair (order #2769685)

YOUR SWORDMASTER'S ABILITIES

On this sheet, we explain your most important abilities. We explain the ones you are unlikely to need only briefly.

Two concepts are important to understanding these abilities: Actions and Strain.

In a single combat round, you only have one **Action**. Some talents or skills use up this Action. This means that if you use this talent or skill, you cannot use another talent or skill that uses an Action. In the full **Earthdawn** game, there is more to Actions and different types of them, but we don't need that here.

Some talents or skills are demanding to use or require energy to power them; they cause **Strain**. A talent or skill that causes Strain causes you 1 Damage Point every time you use it (every time you roll it). Often, taking this damage pays off because it helps you to avoid taking more Damage or to accomplish great deeds. In the full **Earthdawn** game, some abilities cause more than 1 Strain, but they are more powerful than what you have now.

The descriptions below note if a talent or skill uses the Action or causes Strain.

Important Talents and Skills

Barsaivian Legends: *Action*. You roll this to see what you know about all sorts of Legends and tales, or if one contains something that might help you right now. The gamemaster determines the difficulty.

Conceal Object: *Action, Strain*. You have already used this to conceal your dagger in your clothing. An opponent makes a Perception (9) Test when he first sees you. If he fails, you gain Surprise when you produce the dagger—the opponent cannot act that round. Simply assume you re-conceal the dagger between fights.

Maneuver: *Action*. Instead of attacking, you specify one opponent and roll this. The result replaces your Physical Defense until your turn next round. On that turn, if the opponent has not hit you since you used Maneuver, you have out-maneuvered him and gain the Rank (1) as a bonus to the Attack and Damage Test. With this low rank, you will probably only use it if you cannot hit otherwise.

Melee Weapons: *Action*. This talent is used to attack with melee weapons; the difficulty is the opponent's Physical Defense.

Parry: *Strain*. If someone hits you with a melee weapon or unarmed attack, you can roll this against the result of his Attack Test. If you succeed, you avoid being hit, and there is no Damage Test. You can use this twice per round. You get a bonus to the Parry Test depending on what you use to parry: +3 for the broadsword, +2 for the short sword, +1 for the dagger, +2 for the shield. You cannot use this talent if you have nothing to parry with.

Taunt: *Strain*. You taunt a person; the person must be able to understand you. Roll this against Social Defense. If successful, the target suffers a penalty of –1 per Result Level (p. 7) to all tests, until the end of the next round. A target can only suffer from one Taunt at a time.

Throwing Weapons: *Action*. This skill is used to attack with thrown weapons; the difficulty is the opponent's Physical Defense. Damage depends on the weapon used. Weapons have ranges. If the opponent is farther away (in hexes) than the first value, you suffer a –2 penalty to Attack and Damage Tests. If he is farther away than the second value, he is out of reach.

Wound Balance: You roll this instead of your Knockdown Step when you must make a Knockdown Test.

Other Talents and Skills

Avoid Blow: Works like Parry above, but also against thrown and missile attacks. There is no bonus from equipment.

Conversation: When talking with someone else, you can use this to make them like you better.

Dancing: Your Artisan skill; you probably do well at festivals when dancing.

First Impression: When you meet someone for the first time, you can use this to make them like you better.

Karma Ritual: You perform this ritual to replenish used Karma Points, and to determine how many you can have at any one time.

Read/Write and **Speak Language**: These are the languages you know how to read and write or speak. In the full game, there are occasions where you roll them, but you won't need them here.

Swimming: You roll this to swim. We don't have any water in this adventure, though. T'skrang have advantages in this ability.

T'skrang Lore: This imparts knowledge pertaining to your race.

Unarmed Combat: Attack without a weapon. Swordmasters are all about weapons, though, and there is no bar brawl in this adventure.

STEP/ACTION DICE TABLE

Step Number	Action Dice
4	D6
5	D8
6	D10
7	D12
8	2D6
9	D8+D6
10	2D8
11	D10+D8
12	2D10
13	D12+D10
14	2D12
15	D12+2D6
16	D12+D8+D6
17	D12+2D8
18	D12+D10+D8
19	D12+2D10
20	2D12+D10

Contributing

You can contribute to the group's efforts primarily through your fighting abilities. You have excellent defensive abilities through your Parry talent, so try to get the bad guys' attention and keep the heat off of characters like the Nethermancer and Thief. In a decisive situation against a Namegiver opponent, use Taunt, and spend Karma on the test to make it work better. Your other social abilities are not used in this adventure, but tell the gamemaster that townsfolk like you better than others and trust you more than the other adepts.

Neville Sinclair (order #2769685)

Zeeth of the Silent Wings, First Circle Windling Thief

No, it is you who needs me. My skills are invaluable. Would you know a dart trap if you saw one? Certainly you could muscle your way through a door, but would it give before the Horror ate your head? Scoff at my skills and that's the chance you take. Some call me secretive, but I am a Thief, am I not? I must move undetected, unseen by prying eyes, and so I need solitude. Can you trust me? Of course you can. I am a Thief, not a fool.

Race: You are a windling. Windlings are only 18 inches tall and weigh about 13 pounds, and they can take to the air on two pairs of dragonfly-like winds. Windlings are seen as pranksters and tricksters, but are good natured, curious, and revere life and nature. A windling's skin color changes to match his place of living after he has been there for a month. Windling ears have extremely elongated points.

Discipline: You are a Thief. Thieves show others the folly of clinging to possessions, because life goes on even after the Thief takes something away. Thieves are self-reliant and self-confident, and see their abilities as a result of stealing magic from the world.

Game Information

Attributes

DEX (18): 7	**PER** (14): 6	**STR** (7): 4
WIL (12): 5	**TOU** (11): 5	**CHA** (14): 6

Characteristics

Initiative: 7
Physical Armor: 3
Mystic Armor: 1
Death: 32
Unconsciousness: 24
Wound Threshold: 8
Karma Points: 6

Physical Defense: 12
Spell Defense: 8
Social Defense: 8
Recovery Tests: 2
Knockdown: 4
Movement: 3/8*

* Flying Movement Rate

Thief Talents

Astral Sight (1): 7
Karma Ritual[D] (1): 1
Lock Picking[D] (1): 8
Melee Weapons (1): 8
Picking Pockets[D] (1): 8
Silent Walk[D] (2): 9
Trap Initiative[D] (1): 8

[D] Discipline Talent

Skills

Alchemy (2): 8
Alchemy and Potions[K] (2): 8
Avoid Blow (1): 8
Forgery (1): 8
Poetry[A] (1): 7
Read/Write Language (2): Dwarf, Windling
Speak Language (2): Dwarf, Windling
Streetwise (1): 7
Throalic Law[K] (1): 7
Windling Lore[K] (1): 7

[A] Artisan skill; [K] Knowledge skill

Racial Abilities

Your race has allowed you to learn the Astral Sight talent and being a Windling increases your Physical Defense by +2. You can fly, too. Your flight can last for up to twenty minutes. You must rest one minute for every minute spent flying to take to the air again. For example, if you have flown twenty minutes, and then rest ten minutes, you can fly for another ten minutes. You can move much faster while flying, and can hover perfectly or perform aerial maneuvers.

Armor

Leather (Phys 3)

Weapons

Windling Sword (Damage 7)

Equipment

Leather Gloves, Traveler's Garb

Neville Sinclair (order #2769685)

YOUR THIEF'S ABILITIES

On this sheet, we explain your most important abilities. We explain the ones you are unlikely to need only briefly.

Two concepts are important to understanding these abilities: Actions and Strain.

In a single combat round, you only have one **Action**. Some talents or skills use up this Action. This means that if you use this talent or skill, you cannot use another talent or skill that uses an Action. In the full **Earthdawn** game, there is more to Actions and different types of them, but we don't need that here.

Some talents or skills are demanding to use or require energy to power them; they cause **Strain**. A talent or skill that causes Strain causes you 1 Damage Point every time you use it (every time you roll it). Often, taking this damage pays off because it helps you to avoid taking more Damage or to accomplish great deeds. In the full **Earthdawn** game, some abilities cause more than 1 Strain, but they are more powerful than what you have now.

The descriptions below note if a talent or skill uses the Action or causes Strain.

Important Talents and Skills

Astral Sight: *Strain*. You make an Astral Sight (6) Test to see astral space for 1 round. Astral space is always lit, and you see sources of magic such as magical items or active spells glowing brightly. If you beat a person's Spell Defense with the roll, you can learn if the person is an adept.

Avoid Blow: *Strain*. If an attack hits you, you can roll this against the Attack Test result. If you succeed, you avoid the attack; no Damage is rolled. You can use this once per round.

Melee Weapons: *Action*. This skill is used to attack with melee weapons; the difficulty is the opponent's Physical Defense.

Silent Walk: You roll this and the sound of your steps or the hum of your wings is muffled. Opponents make a Perception Test against your Silent Walk Test result; if they fail, they don't hear you. They can still see you. Your Movement is halved (round up).

Trap Initiative: *Strain*. If a trap triggers, you roll this instead of your Initiative Step to avoid being hit.

Other Talents and Skills

Alchemy and Potions: You have knowledge of potions and poisons, and can determine if someone is poisoned.

Alchemy: You can use this to produce poisons and potion, and identify different ones.

Forgery: You forge letters, legal documents, or even pieces of art with this.

Karma Ritual: You perform this ritual to replenish used Karma Points, and to determine how many you can have at any one time.

Lock Picking: You roll this against a Difficulty Number depending on the lock to open it.

Picking Pockets: You pick pockets, or other containers on a person, with this.

Poetry: Your artisan skill, likely a favorite pastime. You probably carry a small book with your creations around, and events might inspire you to compose a short poem.

Read/Write and **Speak Language**: These are the languages you know how to read and write or speak. In the full game, there are occasions where you roll them, but you won't need them here.

STEP/ACTION DICE TABLE

Step Number	Action Dice
4	D6
5	D8
6	D10
7	D12
8	2D6
9	D8+D6
10	2D8
11	D10+D8
12	2D10
13	D12+D10
14	2D12
15	D12+2D6
16	D12+D8+D6
17	D12+2D8
18	D12+D10+D8
19	D12+2D10
20	2D12+D10

Streetwise: You know the ways of towns and cities and can find secret places or wrestle secret knowledge from people in the know.

Throalic Law: You know some things about the law of Throal— it never hurts to know what you get for breaking them, eh?

Windling Lore: You know lore pertaining to your race, traditions, preferences, and similar things.

Contributing

You can contribute to the group's efforts by sneaking around and learning things in secret before the group acts. You are not that good in a fight, but can hold your own, and are hard to hit and can easily escape by taking flight. Use this to get an opponent's attention and then get away, leaving him open for attacks by others.

Neville Sinclair (order #2769685)

LEANDA SOFTTONES, FIRST CIRCLE ELF TROUBADOUR

Tell me your tale, good friend, and I will share one of mine. Stories are meant for telling, after all. What good do they serve if they are held inside to wither, unused, and slowly die as they fade from memory? Yes, of your tale speak, brave adventurer, that it may nourish your Legend as the spring rains nourish the fields. Old is the world, and much of it lost. What little of our past that remains lies hidden in the tales told by our grandfathers, tales passed down through the years by Troubadours long dead. Through those stories their voices reach us from across the gulf of time, speaking of things gone and nearly forgotten, of splendors waiting to be re-discovered. Hear my songs of brave heroes who fight to regain the glories of the past and create the wondrous future, for these men and women are the Legends of tomorrow.

Race: You are an elf. Slightly taller but more slender and graceful than humans, most other races consider elves to be beautiful. Elves themselves prefer things of beauty and elegance, either natural or constructed, be they masterful poems or the primal forces of a thunderstorm. Elves are long-lived and have pointed ears and sparse body hair.

Discipline: You are a Troubadour. Troubadours are entertainers, sages, and storytellers. They see themselves as bringing people together by creating a common culture and communicating ideas; they connect the present with the past through teaching history and recounting Legends, and they teach Namegivers ideals and virtues when telling tales of great heroes.

GAME INFORMATION

Attributes

DEX (13): 6	**PER** (16): 7	**STR** (11): 5
WIL (11): 5	**TOU** (11): 5	**CHA** (18): 7

Characteristics

Initiative: 5	**Physical Defense:** 7
Physical Armor: 4	**Spell Defense:** 9
Mystic Armor: 3	**Social Defense:** 10
Death: 32	**Recovery Tests:** 2
Unconsciousness: 24	**Knockdown:** 5
Wound Threshold: 8	**Movement:** 7
Karma Points: 4	

Troubadour Talents

Emotion Song (2): 9
First Impression[D] (2): 9
Impress[D] (1): 8
Item History[D] (1): 8
Karma Ritual[D] (1)
Mimic Voice[D] (1): 8

[D] Discipline Talent

Skills

Elven Lore[K] (2): 9
Etiquette (1): 8
Legends and Heroes[K] (2): 9
Melee Weapons (1): 7
Music[A] (1): 8
Read/Write Language (2): Dwarf, Elf
Speak Language (2): Dwarf, Elf
Streetwise (1): 8
Throwing Weapons (2): 8

[A] Artisan skill; [K] Knowledge skill

Racial Abilities

You have Low-Light Vision that allows you to see perfectly by no brighter a light source than the stars.

Armor

Ferndask Shield (Deflect 1/2; Phys 1; Myst 2; Init 1), Leather (Phys 3)

Weapons

Short Sword (Damage 9), Bola (Damage 8; Range 6–12 yards; Entangle 9), 2×Daggers (Damage 7; Range 5–10 yards)

Equipment

Musical Instrument (your choice); Wealthy Traveler's Garb

Neville Sinclair (order #2769685)

YOUR TROUBADOUR'S ABILITIES

On this sheet, we explain your most important abilities. We explain the ones you are unlikely to need only briefly.

Two concepts are important to understanding these abilities: Actions and Strain.

In a single combat round, you only have one **Action**. Some talents or skills use up this Action. This means that if you use this talent or skill, you cannot use another talent or skill that uses an Action. In the full **Earthdawn** game, there is more to Actions and different types of them, but we don't need that here.

Some talents or skills are demanding to use or require energy to power them; they cause **Strain**. A talent or skill that causes Strain causes you 1 Damage Point every time you use it (every time you roll it). Often, taking this damage pays off because it helps you to avoid taking more Damage or to accomplish great deeds. In the full **Earthdawn** game, some abilities cause more than 1 Strain, but they are more powerful than what you have now.

The descriptions below note if a talent or skill uses the Action or causes Strain.

Important Talents and Skills

Mimic Voice: If you hear someone's voice, you may make a test with this against his Social Defense. If successful, you can use his voice to fool others. If you do, make another test; listeners must make Perception Tests against the result. If they fail, you have fooled them, and they think they heard the other person's voice! (They won't believe you if they see it was you, though.)

Legends and Heroes: *Action*. You roll this to see what you know about all sorts of Legends and tales, or if one contains something that might help you right now. The gamemaster determines the difficulty.

Melee Weapons: *Action*. This skill is used to attack with melee weapons; the difficulty is the opponent's Physical Defense.

Throwing Weapons: *Action*. This skill is used to attack with thrown weapons; the difficulty is the opponent's Physical Defense. Damage depends on the weapon used. Weapons have ranges. If the opponent is farther away (in hexes) than the first value, you suffer a –2 penalty to Attack and Damage Tests. If he is farther away than the second value, he is out of reach.

Other Talents and Skills

Emotion Song: You perform a song, and everyone in the audience becomes more likely to follow suggestions related to the song.

First Impression: When you first meet someone, you can make them like you better by using this.

Impress: You can influence others better by impressing them with a short performance.

Item History: You can learn the history of an item you study, but this takes a week. This is very important for using the legendary magical items more powerful adepts often find and use.

Karma Ritual: You perform this ritual to replenish used Karma Points, and to determine how many you can have at any one time.

Read/Write and **Speak Language**: These are the languages you know how to read and write or speak. In the full game, there are occasions where you roll them, but you won't need them here.

STEP/ACTION DICE TABLE

Step Number	Action Dice
4	D6
5	D8
6	D10
7	D12
8	2D6
9	D8+D6
10	2D8
11	D10+D8
12	2D10
13	D12+D10
14	2D12
15	D12+2D6
16	D12+D8+D6
17	D12+2D8
18	D12+D10+D8
19	D12+2D10
20	2D12+D10

Elven Lore: You know things pertaining to your race, traditions, and ideals.

Etiquette: You know how to behave and act in social situations, and can easily anticipate how to act in foreign cultures.

Music: Your artisan skill. While your Discipline allows you to emulate all sorts of performances, your ability at this is likely what got you the attention of your first trainer.

Streetwise: You know the ways of towns and cities and can find secret places or wrestle secret knowledge from people in the know.

Contributing

You can contribute to the group's efforts primarily with your ranged attacks. Play close attention to what your bola can do! You have a great number of social abilities we have to neglect in this adventure, but tell your gamemaster everybody in town likes you. A lot!

Neville Sinclair (order #2769685)

FIGHTING AND HURTING

Combat? Fighting? Not worth it, son. There's too much to look out for; too much that can go wrong.
In the end, everybody's just injured, or broken, or dead—and the healers have their hands full.
Combat's not really something anyone should seek out. Ever.

• G'KRALL "WHIP" V'STRIMON •

This chapter provides a short overview of combat, options to use in combat, and healing. The basic rules for rolling dice are described on p. 6, and the abilities listed with the pre-generated characters (p. 20) describe how they can be used. This chapter contains only the basics needed to complete the adventure and some options to spice things up a little— adepts of low Circle often have to rely on some mundane maneuvers until their abilities grow stronger. The rules in this chapter apply to characters and creatures, except where a creature's description says otherwise. It might come in handy to have these pages ready for all players to peruse.

COMBAT

Combat in **Earthdawn** takes place over several combat rounds, each round lasting approximately 6 seconds. A combat round is resolved in these four steps:

1. Declare actions
2. Determine initiative
3. Resolve actions
4. End of round, begin new round

At the start of a combat round, every player declares the **actions** his character intends to undertake (do not confuse this with the Actions used up by talents and skills). Each need only be a rough description, such as "I attack the nearest opponent" or "I cast a spell." If a player does something other than the declared action later, he adds +2 to the Difficulty Number for the new action.

Combatants then determine their **Initiative** by rolling their Initiative Step. The Initiative Step is the Dexterity Step modified by penalties from armor and shields (this has already been done for the characters provided with the adventure). The characters' and their opponents' actions are resolved in order of the Initiative Results, from highest to lowest.

A character **resolves actions** on his turn—at his initiative count—by following the procedures outlined below. With some exceptions, such as the Avoid Blow talent or skill, everything a character can do is resolved on his turn.

At the **end of round**, some effects of talents, skills, and spells end, as do some bonuses and penalties from combat options (see below).

ATTACKS

Most abilities characters use against each other are attacks; we explain them here for every field of combat for brevity. Attack Tests are Action Tests against one of the target's Defense Ratings. Physical attacks performed with Melee Weapons, Throwing Weapons, Missile Weapons, and Unarmed Combat target the opponent's Physical Defense. Magical attacks like Spellcasting target Spell Defense. Social attacks like Taunt target Social Defense. If the Test Result for the ability used is at least equal to the Defense Rating, the attack is usually successful, although some abilities still allow avoiding it at this point. If the attack is not avoided, an effect is applied, either by another roll or a static effect.

Effects of Attacks

In **physical combat**, the effect of a successful attack is usually a Damage Test. There are some attacks that don't do damage; these explain what to do in their individual rules. Damage in physical combat is based on your character's Strength Step. If you use a weapon, you add its Damage Step to your Strength Step to determine the step for the Damage Test. The weapons on your character sheets already have the two steps added together. Roll the Step; the result is the number of Damage Points caused. If the target has Physical Armor, he subtracts his Physical Armor from the Damage Test Result. Damage caused is recorded as a running total, dubbed **current damage**.

ENTANGLING WEAPONS

Some weapons the characters have (the bola and the whip) are **entangling weapons**. They entangle the target on a Good Result on the Attack Test. An entangled character is Harried (p. 32), and must make a successful Strength or Dexterity Test against the Difficulty Number provided with the weapon's entry (described as "Entangle:") on your character sheet to break free.

Neville Sinclair (order #2769685)

In **spell combat**, the effect is either a Damage Test, a static effect, or something special. Damage Tests are similar to physical combat, but they add some bonus determined by the spell to the magician's Willpower Step (this has already been done on the Nethermancer's character sheet). Damage Test results are reduced by either Physical or Mystic Armor, as determined by the spell used. Other effects are applied as described by the spell.

Social combat does not cause damage. Effects of social combat are usually measured by the talent or skill's rank and the Result Level of the Attack Test and are described more fully in the ability descriptions.

Result Levels

There are several levels of success, achieved with different Test Results when compared to the Difficulty Number in question. Look at the Result Level Table. For a Difficulty Number of 8, an Average Result (or hit) occurs on a Test Result of 8 or higher, a Good Result on a 13 or higher, an Excellent Result on a 16 or higher, and an Extraordinary Result on a 20 or higher. Only Average and Excellent results matter for most of the abilities of the characters in this demo.

On an Excellent Result (or better) of a physical or spell attack, the character has scored an **Armor-Defeating Hit** (although the attack can still be avoided as any other—but of course it is harder to avoid such a good roll). An Armor-Defeating Hit means that no armor is subtracted from the Damage Test result; the target suffers all of the damage. However, shields help to prevent Armor-Defeating Hits. They add their Deflection Bonus to the Difficulty Number for an Armor-Defeating Hit. The Deflection Bonus is described for the Shield as "Deflect X/Y" with the X being applied to the Difficulty Number for attacks against Physical Defense, and the Y against Spell Defense.

Now that you know about Armor-Defeating Hits, you can write down the Difficulty Numbers for an opponent to hit you in that way after the Defense Rating on your character sheet for quick reference.

Krarg has a Physical Defense of 10 and a footman's shield (Deflect 2/0). It takes an Attack Test result of 10 to hit him, and of 22 to score an Armor-Defeating hit instead of the normal 20, if the Attack is made against his Physical Defense. His shield provides armor and makes it harder for opponents to circumvent it! On the other hand, there are no mighty two-handed weapons for Krarg, and the shield does not help against magical or social attacks (made against his Spell or Social Defense Ratings).

Wounds

If a character sustains a number of Damage Points equal to or higher than his Wound Threshold in one blow (after subtracting armor), he suffers a Wound. He must make an immediate Knockdown Test against a Difficulty Number equal to the Damage just taken, minus his Wound Threshold, plus 3. The character uses the Step listed under "Knockdown" on his character sheet or the Wound Balance talent or skill for this Test. If he fails, he is Knocked Down (p. 32). Note that only one Wound is caused per Damage Test, even if the Test Result is double or triple the character's Wound Threshold.

Wounds also make it harder for a character to act. Every Wound after the first causes a –1 penalty to all tests.

RESULT LEVEL TABLE

Difficulty Number	—Result— Pathetic	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent	Extraordinary
2	–	1	2–4	5–6	7–8	9+
3	–	1–2	3–5	6–7	8–9	10+
4	–	1–3	4–6	7–9	10–11	12+
5	1	2–4	5–7	8–10	11–13	14+
6	1	2–5	6–8	9–12	13–16	17+
7	1–2	3–6	7–10	11–14	15–18	19+
8	1–3	4–7	8–12	13–15	16–19	20+
9	1–4	5–8	9–14	15–17	18–21	22+
10	1–5	6–9	10–15	16–19	20–22	23+
11	1–5	6–10	11–16	17–20	21–24	25+
12	1–6	7–11	12–17	18–22	23–26	27+
13	1–6	7–12	13–19	20–24	25–28	29+
14	1–7	8–13	14–20	21–25	26–30	31+
15	1–8	9–14	15–22	23–26	27–30	31+
16	1–9	10–15	16–23	24–27	28–32	33+
17	1–10	11–16	17–24	25–29	30–33	34+
18	1–11	12–17	18–25	26–30	31–35	36+
19	1–11	12–18	19–27	28–32	33–36	37+
20	1–12	13–19	20–28	29–33	34–38	39+

Krarg has a Wound Threshold of 10 and Physical Armor of 5. He is attacked and hit; the Damage Test result is 15. He subtracts his Physical Armor of 5, and suffers 10 Damage Points–his Wound Threshold exactly. He now calculates the Difficulty for the Knockdown Test as 10–Wound Theshold+3. As his Wound Threshold is 10, the Difficulty Number is only 3 (10–10+3=3). Had the attack been Armor-Defeating, the Difficulty Number would have been 8 (15–10+3=8). He has only one Wound for now, and suffers no penalty. With the next one, though, he would suffer from a –1 penalty to all tests.

Unconsciousness and Death

All damage a character suffers is added up. After an attack, the Damage Total is compared to the Unconscious and Death Ratings of the character. If the Damage total is equal or higher than the Unconsciousness Rating, the character falls unconscious. If it is higher than the Death Rating, the character is dead. At least for the moment.

Neville Sinclair (order #2769685)

MOVEMENT

Once per round, on your turn, you can move your Movement Rate in hexes (twice this in yards for those not using a battlemap) in one continuous motion. You can move freely; no one will attack you for just moving past. You can also run; see the **Combat Options** on p. 32. The gamemaster may reduce your Movement Rate by –1 to –3 if the terrain hinders you or if you drag heavy objects (such as unconscious buddies).

Using a Battlemap

If you use a battlemap, here are some notes for handling movement and character placement.

Characters can attack only adjacent hexes with melee or unarmed attacks (and some spells, such as the Nethermancer's Spirit Grip). You cannot run through an enemy's hex, but you can run through an ally's hex if he is aware of your intention (can see you). **Earthdawn** uses facing; the direction a character's miniature or token "looks at" is important. The three hexes behind the character are where he is Blindsided (p. 32).

OPTIONS AND SITUATIONS

In combat, there are a variety of combat options—special maneuvers that provide a bonus at some cost. There are also situations in which you may find yourself, or into which you might bring your opponents.

Combat Options

Combat options modify your tests or Ratings in a combat round. These options have to be announced when actions are declared. If you decide to not use an option you had previously declared on your turn, this is treated as changing your declared action (+2 to the Difficulty Number). Some of these options cause Strain and some require the Action; these factors are noted here in the same was as they are for the talents on your character sheet. Combat Options cannot be combined.

Here are the most important ones:

Aggressive Attack: *Strain*. You get a +3 bonus to your melee or unarmed Attack and Damage Tests, but suffer a –3 penalty to your Defenses the entire round.

Attacking to Knockdown: Your Damage Test result for a melee or unarmed attack does not cause Damage Points. The opponent must make a Knockdown Test against the Damage Test result (armor is still subtracted). If he fails, he is Knocked Down (see below).

Defensive Stance: You add +3 to your Defenses, but suffer a –3 penalty to all other tests, except Knockdown Tests.

Jumping Up: *Strain*. Instead of using your one Action to stand up, you take Strain and make a Dexterity (6) Test. If successful, you are standing and can use your Action to attack, but you cannot move any more (and cannot use this option if you have already moved). Remember that the Dexterity Test is penalized for being Knocked Down (see below).

Running: *Action, Strain*. Instead of using your Action to attack, you can move double your Movement Rate. This causes you to be Harried (see below).

Situations

There are some situations you might get into that apply certain penalties, or give other bonuses for actions taken against you. Here are the most important ones:

Blindsided: If you cannot see an opponent (on a hex map, you can't see the 3 hexes behind you), your Physical and Spell Defenses are treated as 2 lower for that opponent. Also, you cannot use Avoid Blow or Parry to defend against his attacks, and your shield is useless (both Armor Rating and Deflection Bonus are not taken into account in the attack resolution).

Harried: If you are surrounded by 4 or more opponents, or otherwise cornered so you cannot move freely, you are Harried. Some other stressful situations, like Running, also make you Harried. You receive a –2 penalty to all your Tests and all your Defenses.

Knocked Down: If you are lying on the ground, you receive a –3 penalty to all your Tests and all your Defenses. You must spend your one Action to stand up, or try the more risky Jumping Up option (see above).

HEALING

Healing in **Earthdawn** almost always employs Recovery Tests. You have a number of these available per day, noted on your character sheet. Recovery Tests are reset to the number shown after a good night's sleep, and cannot be saved up from one day to the next. Normally, Recovery Tests are rolled using the character's Toughness Step (sometimes with a bonus from a potion or healing spell), but in some situations, they are used to pay for an effect without being rolled. For example, a Salve of Closure just uses up a Recovery Test for its effect to work.

HEALING DAMAGE

To heal damage, you make a Recovery Test. You must have rested for at least one minute and you cannot make it during combat. Reduce your current Damage Total by the result of a Toughness Test (but never below zero). If you have Wounds, however, you subtract your total number of Wounds from the result. You must now wait for at least one hour before making the next Recovery Test.

HEALING WOUNDS

To heal a Wound, you must have healed all your Damage Points. Then, you must sleep for the night, and in the morning spend one Recovery Test to remove one Wound. This is unlikely to happen during the adventure, so your only methods to heal Wounds will be through some magical potions you can get in the course of the adventure.

UNCONSCIOUSNESS

An unconscious character automatically makes a Recovery Test to reduce Damage after one minute. If another character tries to revive him before that, the unconscious character may make that test immediately. If the Recovery Test result does not lower the Damage Total below the Unconsciousness Rating, the character is still unconscious, and must now wait for one hour before making the next Recovery Test.

DEATH

There are all sorts of things that can bring you back from the dead, if applied in time. But not in this adventure…

Neville Sinclair (order #2769685)

EARTHDAWN THIRD EDITION

Scholars, especially those of the Theran school who know the Books of Harrow, say the world renews itself in cycles. Every now and again, they say, it gets a do-over. Things stay the same, but things change. Sort of ambiguous, I know. But without them, we would not have survived the Scourge.

• Jelarus, Dwarf Troubadour •

Now that you have seen the basics of the rules and the outline of a simple **Earthdawn** adventure, we want to show you a glimpse of what awaits you in **Earthdawn Third Edition.** The rules for **Earthdawn Third Edition** are found in the ***Player's*** and ***Gamemaster's Guides***, and these rules are further expanded in the ***Player's*** and ***Gamemaster's Companions***.

FOR PLAYERS

The most important aspect of the game for players are their characters, so **Earthdawn** books for players focus heavily on the Disciplines and Namegiver races. The Disciplines are not limited to merely providing different abilities to use; the most compelling aspects of your Discipline come in the basic premise and worldview of each—everything else is just another option.

MORE DISCIPLINES

We provided characters from five different Disciplines in this demo. Besides those, ten more form the core of **Earthdawn**:

Air Sailors steer the magical airships of trading houses and navies of the different power groups. They are swashbucklers with a sense of duty that act in the spirit of cooperation, determined to protect and defend their fellow crew and their peoples and to spread their civilizations.

Archers have mystical connections to their ranged weapons, influencing their arrows' flight with magic and staying focused on their targets. There is no rival to the perceptive Archer where accuracy is concerned. As their powers grow, they bounce their projectiles off of walls, change an arrow's course in mid-flight, and create bow and arrow out of thin air.

Cavalrymen lower their lances to clash into the lines of their foes, their mystical connection to their mounts strengthening both of them. Be they windlings flying agile zoak bats, or orks and trolls riding ferocious thundra beasts, their connection to their mounts is deeper than even Beastmasters can achieve, and no friendship with Namegivers can ever go that far.

Elementalists are magicians mastering—and revering—the power and teachings of the five True elements of Air, Earth, Fire, Water, and Wood. They throw fireballs, cast spells transforming or emulating nature, and conjure elemental spirits. They excel at enchanting and employ nature's healing powers.

Illusionists are magicians who create mirages that affect people's minds. From thin air, they create images or voices that are not really there,, convincing their targets that these fabrications are real. Through fooling others, they teach them that the truth is not always what it seems.

Scouts are wayfarers walking in both the natural and civilized worlds, perceiving everything around them and fitting into any environment either by magical deception, stealth, or simply by understanding and acting according to the situation. They are explorers, infiltrators, and investigators, both perceptive and deceptive.

Sky Raiders are the Air Sailors' antithesis. Originating from the trollmoots of the Twilight Peaks and having since spread, they steer sleek airships into raids against both traders and Therans. They are ferocious and physical, but also proud and loyal.

Warriors are craftsmen using their magic to imbue weapons and armor with magical power. Strong-willed, hardy, and true to their word, they are a steadfast bulwark of civilization.

Weaponsmiths train to gain an iron will and a highly critical eye; identifying and creating legendary weapons. To this end, the Discipline borrows abilities from both Elementalism and Wizardry.

Wizards are learned magicians, their spells not focused on a certain area, but providing help in many situations. They deal devastating blows to single enemies, possessing great knowledge of the patterns of all around them. They deal with the realm of ideas, and are as versatile as ideas can be.

MORE RACES

Three more races than those provided as sample characters populate Barsaive: dwarfs, trolls, and obsidimen.

Barsaive's most numerous race and founders of it's largest kingdom, Throal, **dwarfs** are known as builders, be it of cities, communities, or stockpiles of knowledge. They are small but sturdy and strong, and wear their thick beards proudly.

Obsidimen are a race that's living tissue incorporates traits of stone, most over seven feet tall and weighing 900 pounds. Obsidimen are genderless, born of their Liferocks, a large stone formation inhabited by a powerful elemental earth spirit. Regularly, they travel home to their Liferock to meet with their brotherhood and merge with the Liferock, communing with it. While many who meet their first obsidiman assume he is made of stone, obsidimen are creatures of flesh and blood like any other, although they are quite resilient to the effects of weather and injury.

Neville Sinclair (order #2769685)

Towering even the tall obsidimen, whom they call rock brothers, **trolls** come at about eight and a half feet and originate on Barsaive's mountain ranges where they live in clannish societies. Many feature protruding lower canines, but their most exceptional feature are the two horns that grow from the sides of their skulls in any direction. The most important aspect of a troll's life is honor, which a troll extends to his family and clan – and in case of city-dwelling trolls to neighbors and nations. Strong and tough, trolls live into their fifties on average. The clans of the Twilight Peaks are the largest troll population in Barsaive, feared for their raids but admired for their skills at building airships and crafting crystal items.

ADEPT ADVANCEMENT

As your adept advances through the Circles of his Discipline, he learns more and more talents. First Circle characters start with six talents (magicians with seven), and at each new Circle an adept may learn another two new talents. One of these is pre-determined by the Discipline, and is a Discipline talent (that can be boosted with Karma); the other is one chosen from a growing pool of talents. This choice allows you to specialize the path of your Discipline. This specialization starts at First Circle; we have simply made the choices for the pre-generated characters provided with this demo already. For example, the Swordmaster provided in this demo has the Wound Balance talent chosen at first Circle, but he could just as well have gotten the Acrobatic Strike talent. Instead of being better at taking hard blows, he would have learned an ability boosting his defenses. The choices are not mutually exclusive, though—you can choose a talent you have not yet chosen from this pool of options at any later point.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

The advancement system allows you some freedom in developing your character, but also ties into the philosophical ideas behind the Disciplines. Continuing the example, the Swordmaster is all about playing with words and weapons. You automatically learn how to swing a sword or throw a taunt, and can lay more focus on swordplay or dealing with people by choosing specialized abilities, but there is little room for abilities related to traveling such as climbing or swimming. You would have to learn such abilities as skills, and learning skills is not only harder, but the more powerful abilities are not available as skills.

The system also allows you to learn play more easily and approach character creation head-on. You don't have to plan a character completely ahead, so you can learn about new abilities as you go along. **Earthdawn** is rather easy to learn because new abilities are added to your character gradually as he advances in his journey down his Discipline's path. Don't try to memorize everything about every talent or skill in the game before you start—there are over one hundred talents, and most won't be available to your character anyway. While there is some overlap in the talents of the example characters presented in this adventure, they gain increasingly unique abilities as they advance.

PHILOSOPHY

We mentioned several times that the adepts of the Disciplines follow philosophical paths or subscribe to certain worldviews. To showcase possible worldviews, we let the adepts themselves speak and explain the philosophies of their Disciplines to you in fictional treatises, at least one major treatise for each Discipline, in the ***Player's Companion***. Each is only a single example which you are encouraged to stray from, modify, or take as your own. We provide alternative viewpoints throughout the books, and sometimes direct contradictions to certain aspects—each adept's philosophy is unique. Here you get ideas for how to specialize your character. Create a normal Thief, or a con artist (a Thief of trust) or a romancer (a Thief of love).

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Some examples are provided as specialist adept rules. You do not need such a philosophy to play the game, but they offer an option for players who want to delve deeper into such concepts.

Options

In addition to following your Discipline and learning new talents, you can take on additional Disciplines and combine their powers and philosophies, though this comes at a price. You can change the way some talents work or expand their use by learning talent knacks. If dedicated, you can become a questor of one of the twelve Passions—god-like beings that are devoted to a certain aspect of life and civilization—to follow their ideals and act to better the world. (Or make it worse if your chosen Passion is one of the three that went mad during the Scourge.) You can weave threads to powerful magical treasure, exploring its history as you unlock its powers. You can even weave threads to the magical Legend of your adventuring group to gain more power when working together. You may choose to attach blood magic charms or even armor to your body, fuelling their special abilities with your life force.

The Books

With the ***Player's Guide***, you receive all the information required to bring your character to Eighth Circle of his Discipline, and take on multiple Disciplines if you so desire. It contains a short description of Barsaive Province, things your character knows about the larger scale events of the world, and a short introduction to what your character knows of the principles of magic. You find rules for weaving threads to magic items, conjuring spirits, and enough adventuring equipment and minor magical items to last until you can quest for the more powerful ones. It also contains all the rules required for combat and advancing your character.

The ***Player's Companion*** is less rules-heavy than the ***Player's Guide***, giving you more information on the setting, seen through the eyes of your Discipline. It also provides the information necessary to advance to Fifteenth Circle in your Discipline, and options on how to make your talents more versatile or follow a specialist variant of your path. There are also rules on Enchanting, although not every adept is an enchanter.

Future books will detail the traditions, beliefs, and cultures of your race, and much of the information primarily required by the gamemaster can be read by you without much of a problem. There will always be something for you to use, and it will often be designed with unique aspects in mind. For example, in the upcoming ***Kratas: City of Thieves*** there is a wealth of information about the city and its gangs for the gamemaster, but you as a player will be provided with new tools of the thieving trade, and even if you're not a Thief, the book will help you explore the shadowy side to every Discipline.

For Gamemasters

Earthdawn provides a rich world to inspire you to create scenarios, situations, and adventures. While both short and extensive adventures of varying sizes are made available on a frequent basis in both print volumes and downloadable adventures, the world of **Earthdawn** is one for you to take and make it your own.

Barsaive

Barsaive provides a mix of medieval and renaissance civilizations. Since the Scourge, sprawling cities replaced kingdoms or similar expanses that may have existed before the Scourge as the most prominent figures on the political scene. New ideas crop up in some of them, and even the King of Throal lends his ear to public discussion and the newly formed public councils for the neighborhoods of his underground city-kingdom. Barsaive's larger nations are racially mixed, with the notable exception of Blood Wood, where the blood elves still live separated from the larger Barsaivian community, their isolation both a sign of corruption and backwardness. Barsaive is not your typical human-dominated fantasy landscape, and its races weren't shaped by typical fantasy tropes. Both the setting and its inhabitants retain their fantastical nature, but things aren't black and white or limited to stereotypes.

Threats and Perils

In **Earthdawn**, adventures can take place on the political scene, with each city providing different inner workings to make political adventures interesting. There is also opportunity to take politics to the battlefield where the Barsaivians are confronted with the mighty Theran military trying to carve chunks out of their proclaimed province bit by bit. Exploration in different terrains, from jungles to the peaks of mountains, brings the characters into remote corners of the land that are thinly settled and filled with dangerous predators: creatures changed through magic or corrupted by the Scourge. The underground kaers provide many opportunities for exploration, some of them having been abandoned, some of them now infested with undead, and some of them still unopened, their inhabitants oblivious that the Scourge has ended. The traps that once protected their inhabitants from minor Horrors are now an obstacle for explorers. Last but not least, Barsaive is a world of terrible danger, with Horrors still lurking in the dark corners and in abandoned kaers, posing a serious threat for even the most powerful adepts. The Horrors work in many different ways, some acting in the open to slay innocents, some working behind the scenes, influencing and corrupting leaders or normal folks to cause atrocities to their loved ones or the people they are tasked to protect. Even while the most powerful and unimaginable of the Horrors are gone, with a few exceptions, there are many places twisted and many objects cursed by their touch.

A Magical Civilization

Magic is a staple in the world of **Earthdawn**, not only in adventures, but in everyday life. Craftsmen use magical tools, merchants wear magical clothing when traveling, and adepts use magical weapons, armor, and other items. Use of magic is not limited to personal interests, however. Entire parts of society are built on it, be they the magical sponges that clear the air of underground Throal, the magical aqueducts supplying clean water to Vivane, the magical elevators providing access to the platform of the naval fortress of Sky Point, or the engines of t'skrang riverboats burning True fire to set the paddlewheels in motion.

Magic affects all life, and so the Namegivers of Barsaive are more resilient than in the past; and with Death trapped under the fiery sea of lava that bears its name, unnatural death can be defeated by those that can afford the means. But magic has also made many creatures more dangerous, and given some new abilities, especially where they were subject to elemental forces. Fire eagles soar in the skies, termites have grown as large as rats, stone lions stalk their prey in the mountains, and carnivorous squirrels have appeared in the Blood Wood. As much as magic allowed the denizens of the world of **Earthdawn** to build a civilization, it is a primal force they tame.

Magical Heroes

Legendary magical items discovered by the player characters provide gamemasters with a built-in adventure generator. They are the result of legendary deeds of the past, and to weave them to his

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own magical pattern, an adept has to learn these legends, and perhaps repeat or mimic some of the great deeds done with the item. Using legendary magic items usually requires several pieces of information and deeds, and with every fact learned or task done, an item's power grows. These items are not to be thrown away once an adept finds something better; they are artifacts to be explored, unlocked, and harnessed to make their owner more powerful.

Airships and riverboats provide an opportunity for swashbuckling adventures on the water or in the air, as a single scenario or as part of a themed campaign where Air Sailors fend off Sky Raiders intent on looting —or maybe you would rather play the raiders? The Therans, masters of magic, even build their ships from stone and raise mountains to the air to let entire cities fly. Their magical prowess can only be opposed with resolve and ingenuity—something the invaders might have forgotten in their centuries of military, political, and economic dominance.

Messages from Barsaive

Much of the information provided for the world of **Earthdawn** is provided in fictional accounts, told from the perspective of a Namegiver living in the setting. You can treat these individual statements as fact, option, half of the truth only, or even fallacy. This also makes them safe for the players to read without spoiling your campaign plans or crossing the barrier between player and character knowledge, as you can stray from them or modify them.

These accounts can inspire your adventures, guide you on how to communicate the mood of the setting, and allow you to play gamemaster characters more authentically. They're not poetry or prose, though—most often they are scholarly accounts compiled for Throal's Great Library. Learn about the world from the mouths of the people that live in it. The world of **Earthdawn** is a living world, and reading about it will bring your own game to life.

Barsaive is also connected to the rules of the game, as the most important terms are used within the world. An adept may well inform his peers that he is of the Fifth Circle as a Swordmaster and has recently used his Maneuver talent, bolstered with the power of Karma, to be victorious in a duel, wielding his sword to which he has woven a magical thread. This bridges the barrier between the rules and the world, providing a more natural flow in play.

Earthdawn is a game and a world for you to grasp and make your own! Be it with the options presented in the rules, or with the gaps in its setting otherwise assumed to be thinly settled hinterlands that you can fill as you like best.

The Books

In contrast to the ***Player's Guide***, the ***Gamemaster's Guide*** provides a lot of setting information about the province of Barsaive, but also rules for adventuring and dangers, social conflicts and social situations, interaction with gamemaster characters, and advice on how to build and theme adventures and campaigns. This is topped off with descriptions of creatures, spirits, Horrors, and Dragons. Prefacing the collected information on these adversaries (and sometimes, allies) are treatises about their nature. There are also some of the more rare magical treasures that adventurers typically use at the start of their careers.

The ***Gamemaster's Companion*** gets into the thick of rules for you. Mirroring the players' advancement, you get to know more powerful creatures, Great Dragons, and Named Horrors, as well as more powerful Legendary Items to give the players a fighting chance of dealing with these increasingly powerful adversaries. You also get advice on how to build your own magical treasures, how to design them for players with enchanting capabilities, and how to let the characters' own items become legendary as their own legends grow. There are also design systems and guidelines for blood charms, creatures, gamemaster characters, and entire Disciplines. You learn about airships and riverboats, and how to stage combat between them, and can use sample gamemaster characters from a variety of backgrounds and power levels as supporters or enemies.

Future **Earthdawn** products will provide you with in-depth information about the more prominent aspects of the setting and feature adventure hooks— connections that can be made with the information provided from which to build your own adventures and campaigns.

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The Age of Legend

Before science, before history, an era of magic existed in our world's dim past. Magic flowed freely, touching every aspect of the lives of men and women of the Namegiver races. It was an age of heroes, an age of fantastical deeds and mythical stories. It was the Age of Legend. Now, bold heroes from across Barsaive band together to fight for life and freedom against the remaining Horrors and the oppressive Theran Empire, which seeks to bend the rebellious province again to their yoke. Through noble deeds and sacrifice, the heroes of the world forge Barsaive's future, arming themselves for their daunting task with powerful magical spells and treasures.

Misguided Ambitions is an introduction to Earthdawn, a fantasy roleplaying game set in a world of high adventure, high magic, and terrible danger. Inside, you will find everything you need to play your first adventure–just add a couple of dice and your friends!

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